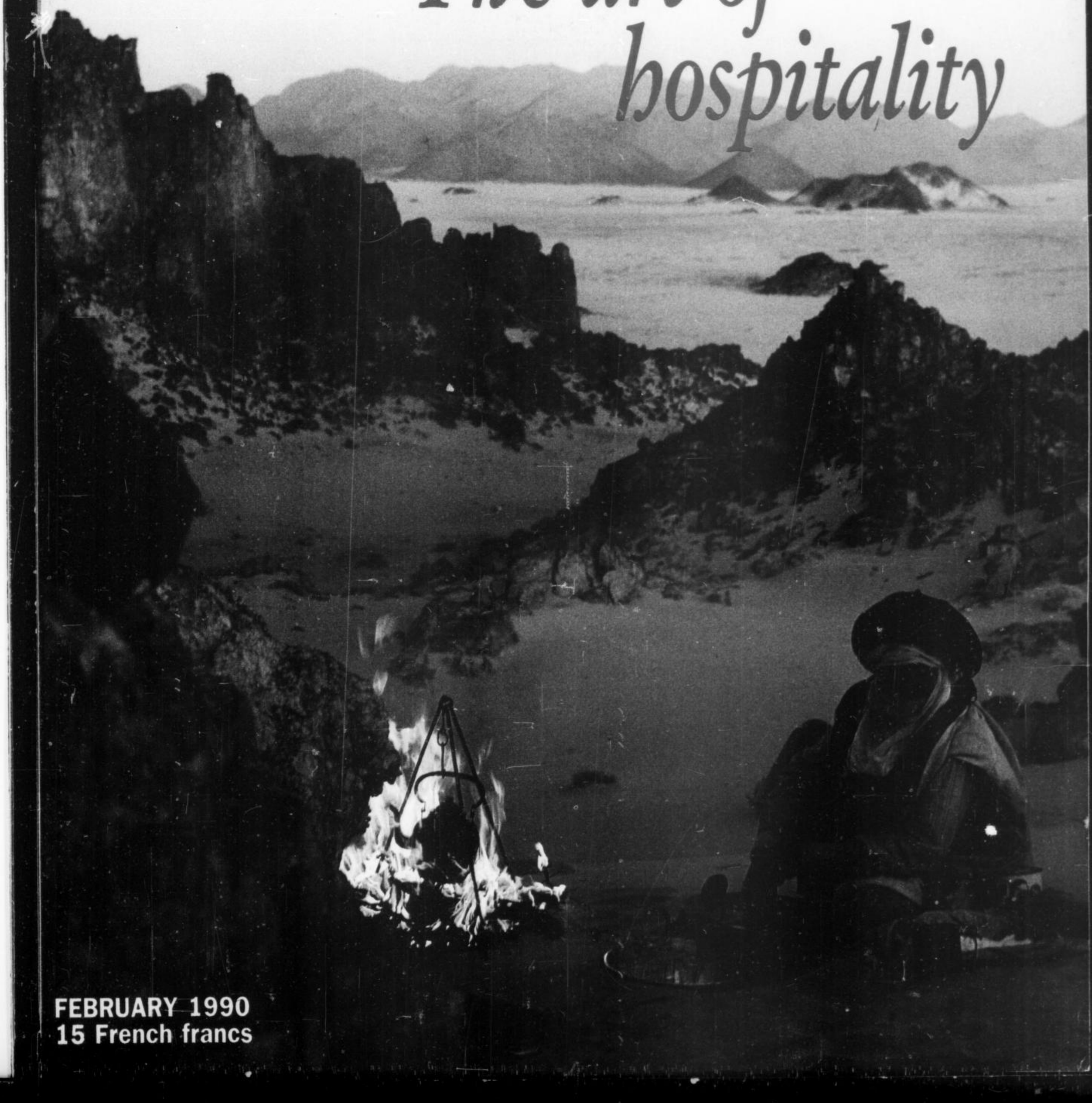
The UNESCO COURIER

INTERVIEW WITH Andrey Voznesensky

The art of hospitality



FEBRUARY 1990
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encounters

We invite readers to send us photographs to be considered for publication in this feature. Your photo should show a painting, a sculpture, piece of architecture or any other subject which seems to be an example of cross-fertilization between cultures. Alternatively, you could send us pictures of two works from different cultural backgrounds in which you see some striking connection or resemblance. Please add a short caption to all photographs.

Women at the fountain, homage to Poussin
1979, diptych, oil on canvas (195 x 260 cm)
by Iba N'Diaye

When painting African subjects, the Senegalese artist Iba N'Diaye sometimes borrows from the works of European masters. His art is a remarkable blend of the African and European cultures between which he moves and whose differences and contradictions he seeks to reconcile. In ''Women at the Fountain'', an evocation of women in the Medina, one of the oldest districts of Dakar, he was inspired by the formal structure of the French painter Nicolas Poussin's ''Eliézer and Rebecca'' (1648). The art critic Anne Dagbert has noted that here ''N'Diaye reinterprets a theme which is above all a pretext, a vehicle for the only subject that really matters: painting itself''.

FEBRUARY 1990

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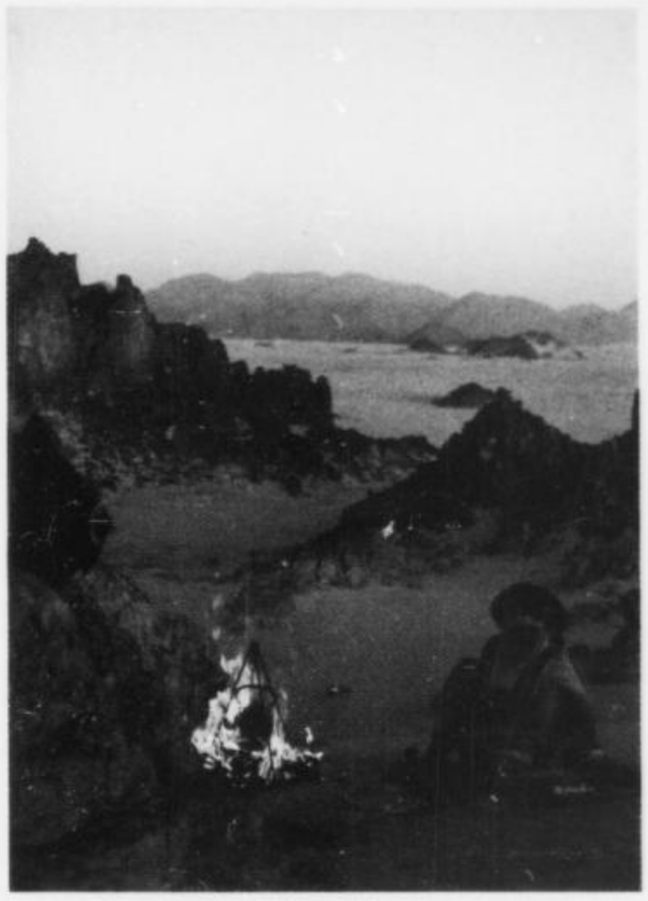

Today there are no more unexplored continents, unknown seas or mysterious islands. But while we can overcome the physical barriers to exploration, the barriers of mutual ignorance between different peoples and cultures have in many cases still not been dismantled.

A modern Ulysses can voyage to the ends of the earth. But a different kind of Odyssey now beckons—an exploration of the world's many cultural landscapes, the ways of life of its different peoples and their outlook on the world in which they live.

It is such an Odyssey that the *Unesco Courier* proposes to you, its readers. Each month contributors of different nationalities provide from different cultural and professional standpoints an authoritative treatment of a theme of universal interest. The compass guiding this journey through the world's cultural landscapes is respect for the dignity of man everywhere.

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Back cover: Indian miniature, Baroda school (18th century).

Andrey Voznesensky

In the late 1950s the noted Soviet poet Andrey Voznesensky emerged as a leader of the literary revival that followed the death of Stalin. Thirty years later, in the age of perestroika, he speaks of the cultural ferment in the USSR today.

Я
башня
Сухарева
боярышня
суриковская
нессучившаяся
текитеки сукровица
убиенная мазурниками
с ромбами и кубиками
На Сухаревой башенке
Иван Великий женится
в Москве землетрясение
как брачная кровать
сдайте яйца сооружению
на белке хоромам
сто лет стоять
Иван Великий женится
на Сухаревой башенке
яее строительЧеглоков
красные дороженьки застелить велите!
почему ж повалены миллионы толп?
. . . . . .

ух!

По Сухаревой башне рыдай, Иван Великий!
Над Москвой белеет овдовевший столп.

You are the chairman of a committee that is organizing a major celebration in the Soviet Union this year to mark the centenary of the birth of Boris Pasternak. When it is remembered that until a few years ago some of Pasternak's works such as his famous novel Doctor Zhivago *were banned in the USSR and others had a very limited circulation, this means that there has been a big change in your country's cultural life. Can you tell us something about the significance of this anniversary celebration?*

— It will be a great celebration, not only of Pasternak but of freedom in literature, of freedom for our intellectuals. *Doctor Zhivago* was not only a novel, it was a symbol of intellectual protest against all forms of pressure and dictatorship. Pasternak was not a politician and *Doctor Zhivago* is a supremely anti-political novel but it had a strong political impact.

A campaign against Pasternak was initiated by the then Soviet leader, Nikita S. Khruschev. Pasternak was expelled from the Soviet Writers' Union. I don't think Khruschev had read any Pasternak, but he was afraid of the intelligentsia and thought that people like Pasternak represented a threat to the regime.

Also symbolic, I think, is the fact that Pasternak gave *Doctor Zhivago* to an Italian publishing house after it had been rejected for publication by the Soviet periodical *Novy Mir.* He wanted contacts outside our culture and he has become a symbol of our desire for such contacts.

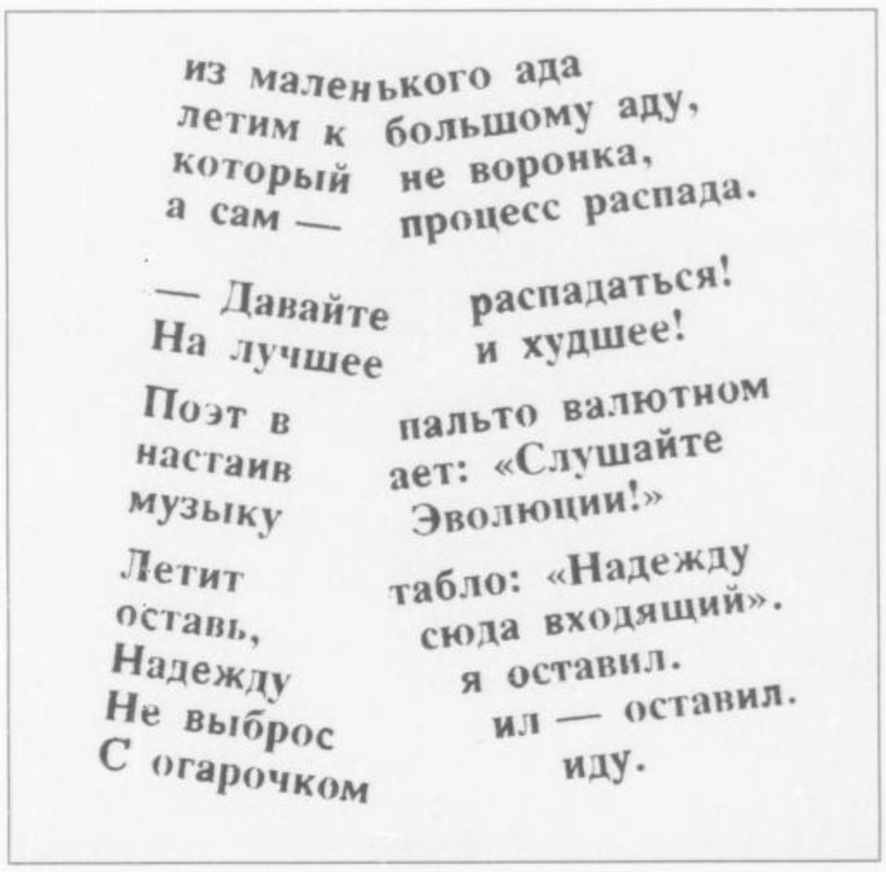
And so we shall not only be celebrating the birth of Pasternak, but Pasternak as a symbol of our intelligentsia. We are creating a Pasternak museum in the writers' village of Peredelkino, where Pasternak had a cottage. Leading writers from all over the world have been invited to the anniversary ceremony which will, I think, be welcomed by millions of people in my country.

Everything is interwoven: literature, politics, religion. Leading liberals and Patriarch Pimen, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, are members of the anniversary committee. Freedom of religion and freedom of publication are closely connected. I am happy that this anniversary will be celebrated in the Soviet Union, but only a few years ago it would not have been possible. I am also very happy that Unesco has included Pasternak's name on its list of outstanding persons whose anniversaries will be celebrated this year.

Your own poetry has been influenced by Pasternak. How far do you identify with him?

— When I was fourteen years old I sent some of my poetry to Pasternak and he telephoned me and invited me to come and see him. From then until I was twenty-eight I was very close to him and he was my only master. At that time he was being harshly attacked by the authorities.

Certainly I was influenced by Pasternak but it was a tragedy for me because he was a genius. I felt in danger of becoming his slave, of losing my own identity. One summer, he showed me some of his recent poems and I discovered that they contained several lines identical to lines I had written and shown him some time before. He said to me, "Andrey, I loved these poems of yours so much that I imagined that they were mine and included them in my volume." At first I felt it was a great honour that Pasternak liked my poems so much, but when I got home I realized that it was a great tragedy for me since these poems were no longer mine but Pasternak's. I stopped writing poetry and started painting. I painted for a year to forget about poetry. Then I began to write again, and this time it was my own work, written in my own way, and this really marked my beginning as a poet.



из маленького ада
летим к большому аду,
который не воронка,
а сам — процесс распада.

— Давайте распадаться!
На лучшее и худшее!

Поэт в пальто валютном
настаив ает: «Слушайте
музыку Эволюции!»

Летит табло: «Надежду
оставь, сюда входящий».
Надежду я оставил.
Не выброс ил — оставил.
С огарочком иду.

Left, Andrey Voznesensky during a poetry reading he gave in Moscow in 1978. This page and facing page above, specimens of "visual poetry" by Voznesensky from his work "Rhapsody of Disintegration".

How would you define Pasternak's qualities as a poet?

— Pasternak's poetic style and technique sprang from the musical exercises he performed as a young man, from his technical skills as a pianist. His every line, his every word, works as a musical note, as if he were pressing the keys of a piano. There are no empty, redundant lines.

But another, more important music can be discerned through the fabric of his works—the music of conscience. The world today is suffering from a lack of conscience. This is a problem facing all humanity. The music of conscience can be heard on every page of *Doctor Zhivago,* the work which meant most to Pasternak and which ends with these prophetic words:

"Although the enlightenment and liberation which had been expected to come after the war had not come with victory, a presage of freedom was in the air throughout these post-war years, and it was their only historical meaning."

Perhaps these lines are relevant to what is happening today.

A selection of poems by Pasternak was recently published in the Soviet Union in an edition of a million copies and sold out overnight...

— Some of the world's greatest poetry and novels are best sellers in the Soviet Union. We may have problems with food and other commodities and perhaps the quality of life is not good, but our public is very well educated in literature.

I hope that living standards in my country can be raised to the same level as in the West, but I am afraid of one thing—that my country may lose its spiritual depth and culture. I do not want our rich past to die. I think that Unesco has the same aim of helping cultures to survive, in small nations as well as large.

Could you tell us something about your life as a poet?

— I never compose poetry with a pen. I walk in the streets, or preferably in the forest, and if I keep walking for two hours I have one poem or two poems or three poems, but if I walk longer I will have a longer poem. I try to finish the piece the same day with maybe small changes made later. Tomorrow I shall not be the same person. The sky will not be the same colour and I shall not be in the same mood. I love Mayakovsky but I never write as he did... he had his notebook, he found a rhyme and he noted it down. Even my geometric poetry is composed in my mind. I don't know how it happens.

I like reciting my poetry. But I am not an actor and I do not like actors reciting my poetry because they make it too theatrical. Reciting poetry for me is not a theatrical act but an act of creation. When I recite a poem I remember the time when it was created and improvise the same creative process.

I have recited my poems in Moscow stadiums to audiences of up to 10,000 people. My biggest audiences numbered up to 14,000 people, although actually I prefer smaller audiences of not more than 2,000. But Moscow is not always the capital of Soviet literature. In Novosibirsk, Omsk and other cities I encountered the same enormous audiences of people interested in poetry—complex poetry, not pop poetry.

What about the new generation of young poets?

— Avant-garde literature is sweeping the Soviet Union today. There are many groups of young poets, not only in Moscow but in every provincial town and city.

Young writers in the Soviet Union today face two kinds of problem. First they are starting from scratch and they need a new coded language and this may seem primitive and naive. Secondly, our poetry, whether it is political, mystical or lyrical in content, tends to seem like formula poetry. These formulas must be broken.

Can you now have unlimited contacts with the West? Do you find any echoes in European countries or in the United States?

— I would say that intellectuals of different countries form a sort of "common nation". Even at the worst periods in Soviet-American relations I enjoyed very good friendships with poets like Robert Lowell and Allen Ginsberg, and today there is, for example, one experimental movement in San Francisco called "language poetry", which has many contacts with young Soviet poets who are moving in the same direction and work in the same style. Poets of my generation also had and continue to have good contacts with the Beat poets, people like Allen Ginsberg, Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Gregory Corso, but I write in a more complex manner than theirs. I feel closer to Robert Lowell and W.H. Auden.

In other words you believe that literature is something universal.

— Yes. It is impossible to be isolated. By virtue of writing in a given language you feel that you belong to a nation. But besides language and national roots there is something that all writers have in common—inspiration. Perhaps it comes from space, perhaps it comes from God, perhaps it is a human instinct, but one thing is certain, the source of inspiration is common to all poets.

You were trained as an architect. Do you have a visual approach to literature?

— My poetry is visual poetry because we live in the age of TV, an age of visual thinking, a world of pictures. In the past grandmother told tales which began "Once upon a time...." Today people watch before they start to listen. The present generation likes pictures more than sounds.

I have painted and sculpted too. As an architect I worked with the Georgian artist Zurab Tseretely on a monument that was built three years ago in Moscow. It is a language monument containing only letters, Russian and Georgian. It is 48 metres high and all the letters are made of metal. For me this monument is both a poetic and a visual creation.

I think literature in the next century will be visual and musical. Some time ago I carried out experiments with music, reciting poetry on stage and trying to put it into musical form. Now I am thinking about the integration of music and poetry. I am also trying to bring visual art and poetry together.

You recently published in* Yunost, *a youth magazine, a poem called "Rhapsody of Disintegration" and you have said that the word "disintegration" has a very special meaning at this moment in the history of the USSR. What did you mean by that?

— I am a poet, not a politician. I sense a process but I do not want to write about it as a journalist would. As a poet I feel that many things are in the process of disintegration in the USSR and I have written a long poem in which all the words evoke disintegration; it speaks about nationalism, political stereotypes and everything which is "disintegrating". The Russian word for "disintegration" is *raspad* and the poem's Russian title is very musical: *Rapsodia Raspada.*

For me this is a new step. The Russian public has become tired of straightforward political news. Last year the circulation of many literary magazines and newspapers jumped dramatically to millions of copies, but now many of them are losing readers because they publish too much political material. People are looking for good literature. And so I am writing about these processes not as a journalist but as a poet.

Today the Soviet people are trying to overcome the tradition of slavery in which they have lived for a thousand years and find democratic solutions. Changes are on the way. I am trying to help this process by persistently provoking people to free themselves from the stereotypes which have endured for so long in my country.

My message is not only for my compatriots. I am trying to find an international symbolism. I have just been to Jerusalem, my first visit to this holy place of the Bible. Jerusalem represents the Muslim, Jewish and Christian worlds. So many things brought together all in one place! And then my compatriots are very interested in Indian philosophy. I think our country is half Asian, half European. It has something of both and thus brings them together. Perhaps our message will have some meaning for Indians and other Asians too.

Don't you think there is a contradiction here? You talk about opening up to world culture, but at the same time nationalism is making new frontiers and building barriers between peoples and nations.

— This is a dialectical matter. I want my compatriots to have food and freedom. We were unable to solve these problems in the nineteenth century, and in the twentieth the possibilities of doing so were blocked by Stalin. We are trying to solve these problems now, and while it is true that we are facing the problem of disintegration, the ultimate outcome must be a new form of integration. In the past, integration of the Russian and other nations was imposed by force. True integration can only come about through democratic choice, economic co-operation and cultural development.

Your country is experiencing a period of intensive cultural activity. Why is poetry playing such an important part in this?

— Today there is an explosion of activity in literary circles, in poetry more than in prose. There are many small literary groups in all towns and cities and an enormous number of them in Moscow. There are some very good poets in rock groups. Rock is very important because it is a new thing for us. For years it was forbidden, but now it is everywhere. The work of the rock poets is uneven but they are certainly much freer than our generation. Some groups of young poets recite their work in the streets, especially in Moscow's first pedestrian street, the Arbat. They produce what I call "immediate poetry" and sell their poems to the public for three roubles, sometimes even for one. All this now seems to be a part of our life. I want them to experiment more, hoping that it will lead to something really great... ■

Apparition II, oil on canvas (162 x 130 cm) by the French artist Benn (1905-1989)

EDITORIAL

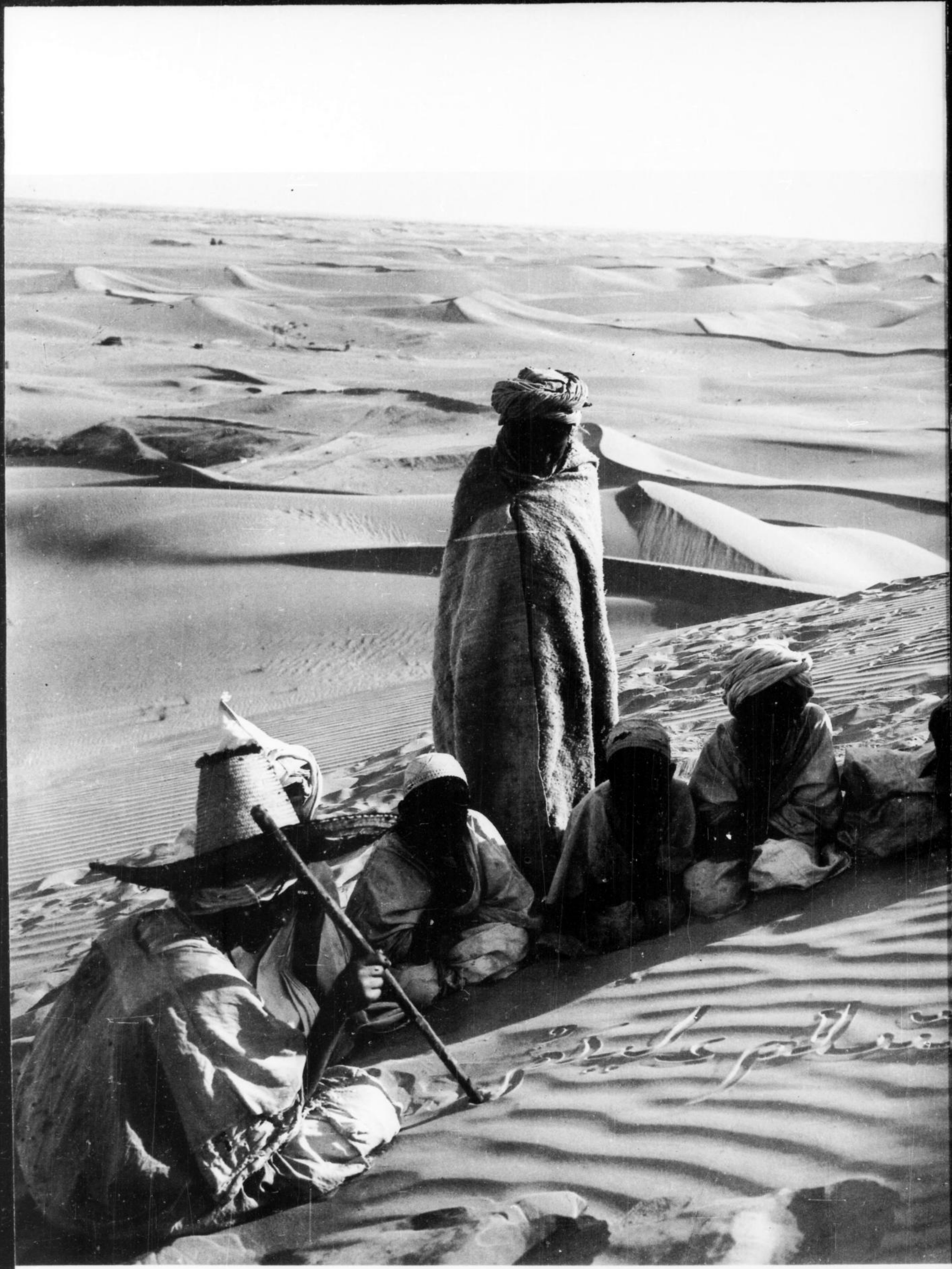
IN ancient Greece, strangers were thought to enjoy divine protection and were received accordingly. In rural India today, they can still count on a welcome fit for the gods. Among the Bedouin of the desert, they are sheltered and protected by their host and all his clan.

From time immemorial people have felt a sacred obligation to share their bread and salt with the passing stranger. The visitor would be invited to sit down at the fireside or in the shade of the veranda and offered a lodging for the night. At a time when they were not protected by law, travellers could, thanks to the conventions of hospitality, find shelter in a house or community not their own. In deserts, mountains, steppeland and other regions where climate and nature were hostile, hospitality could even mean the difference between life and death.

With the development of long-distance trade, travel and exchange, hospitality was extended to pilgrims, merchants and diplomats. Great travellers such as Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta recorded many examples of the generous hospitality without which their epic journeys across Europe, Africa and Asia would have been impossible.

What is left today of the hospitable traditions of olden times? In an age of mass tourism when travel has become a routine matter, a sense of conviviality doubtless still survives the stresses of big city life where living space is often in short supply. But above all, hospitality today tends to be more impersonal and anonymous than in the past. It has even become a matter for legislation. Bilateral treaties and international conventions define the status of foreigners and safeguard their person and their rights.

In theory, time-honoured traditions of hospitality are being interwoven with new values of liberty and democracy. In practice, however, strangers and foreigners are still all too often the victims of incomprehension and contempt from their "host" societies. Racial or national prejudices weigh, sometimes heavily, on those who are today known as "immigrants". It may thus be timely to recall, as we do in the following pages, some traditions of the hospitality which was once such a widespread virtue and again awaits recognition as an expression of tolerance and solidarity.



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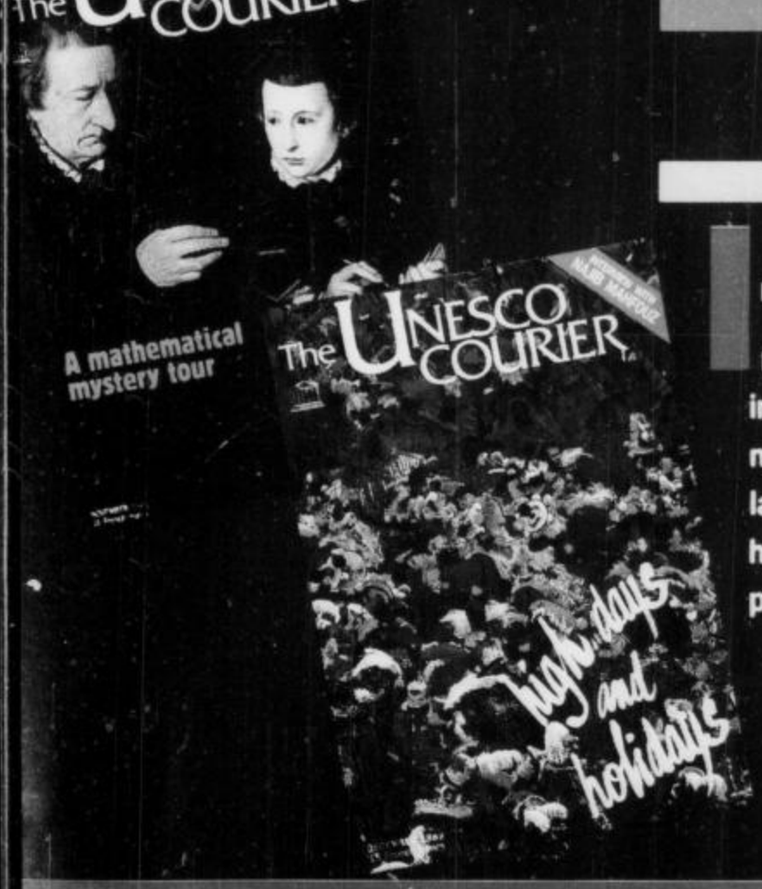

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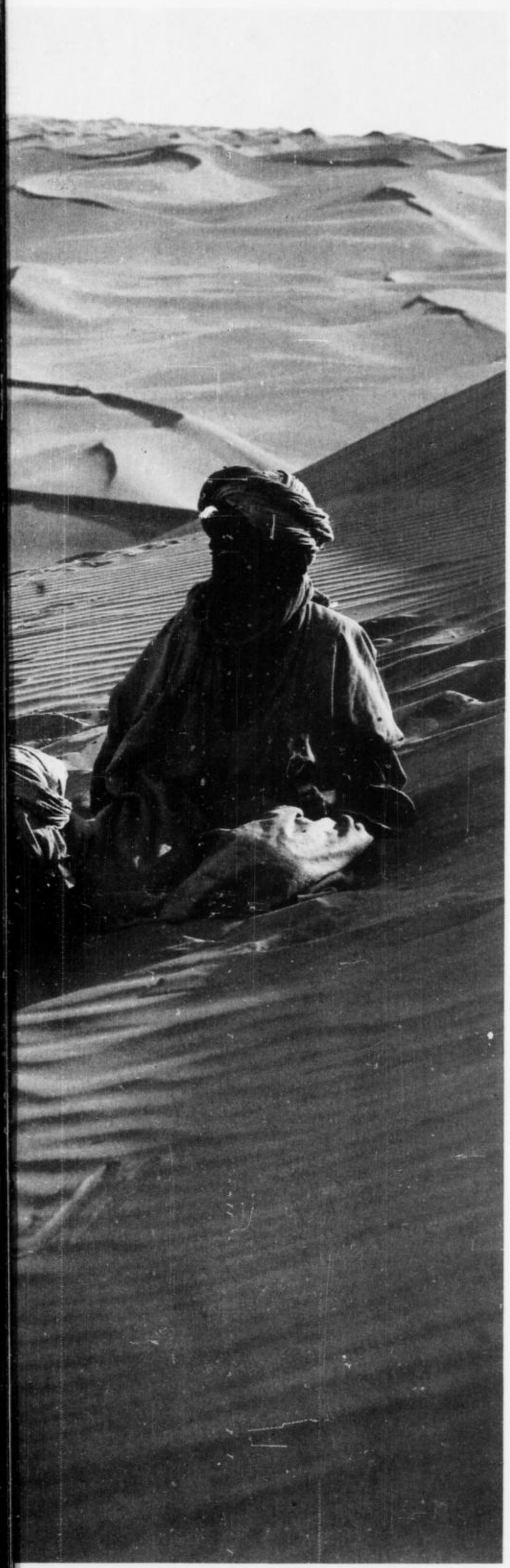
Islands of welcome in a sea of sand



The master of a Qur'anic school traces in the sand the greeting "Salvation be with you".

BY JOSEPH CHELHOD

THERE are two sides to hospitality. In a general sense, it is part and parcel of the ceremonial and social activities of each people. More specifically, it creates a special relationship between host and guest. Among the Bedouin, who are a byword for hospitality, guests are placed under the protection of their hosts and thereby acquire considerable rights in accordance with the desert code of honour. Starting as a simple act of generosity that consists in looking after someone for a short time, hospitality thus becomes an institution that confers almost sacred privileges on the stranger who is welcomed into one's home.

The Bedouin are not of course the only people to accord a special status to guests. The French historian Fustel de Coulanges noted in his *La cité antique* (1864), a study of the part played by religion in the history of Greece and Rome, that food prepared on an altar and shared among several persons established an indissoluble union between them—the stranger who partook of the meal became a member of the religious community. But the traditional hospitality of the desert Arabs has wider implications, both in theory and in practice. A mere glass of water in which a stranger has simply moistened his lips gives him the same privileges as a sumptuous feast. The reason is that the difficulty of surviving in the parched lands where the Bedouin live has created a sense of solidarity and replaced anarchy with a number of beneficent institutions, one of which is hospitality. Through the gift of food a stranger to the region can travel in the desert as freely as the indigenous population.

The first rule of Arab hospitality is that it is offered free, even if it is provided for several days. The host would feel offended if he were offered

anything in return. But this is not the most important feature of Arab hospitality. A set of rules governs the behaviour of both host and guest.

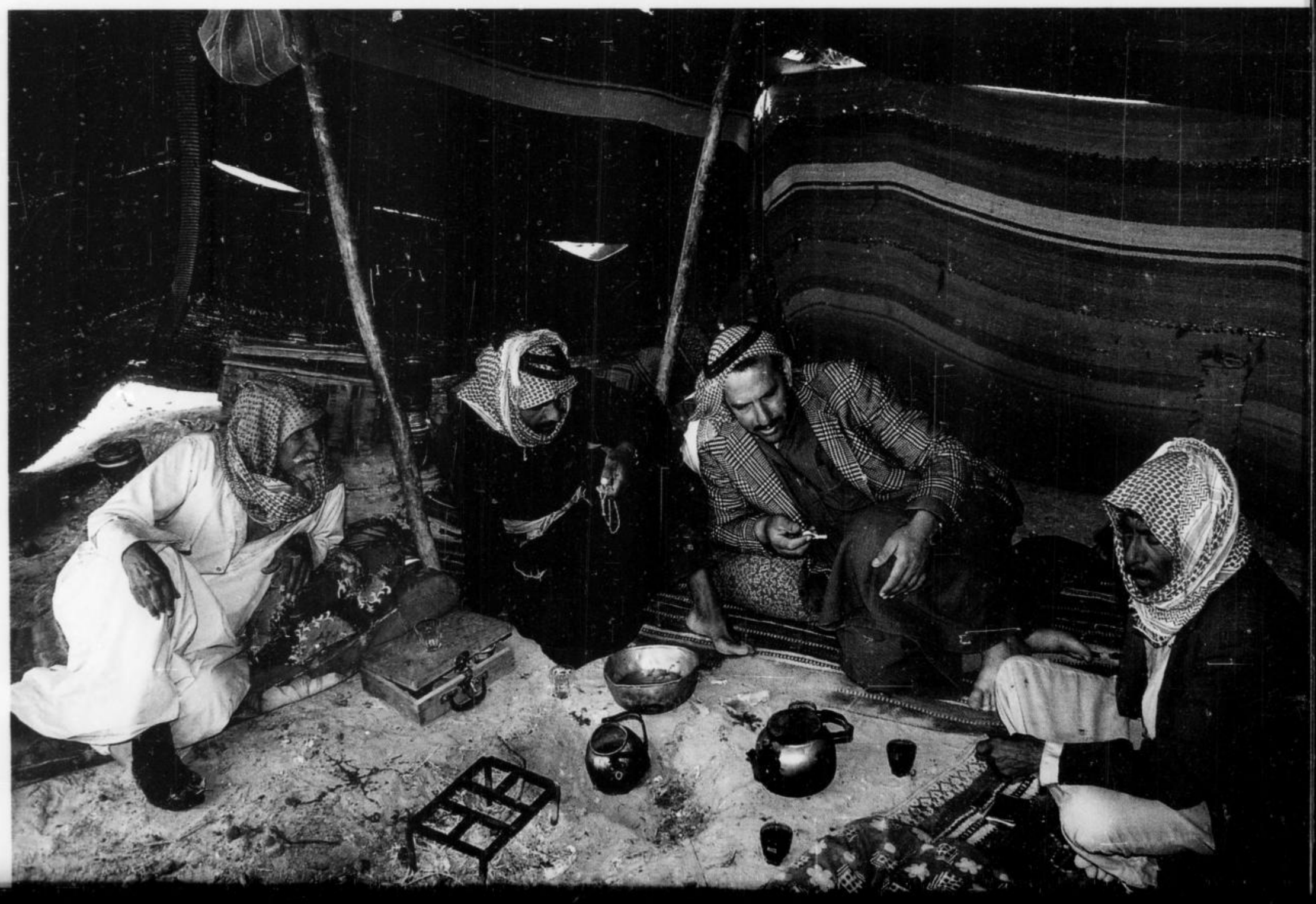
The first sign of hospitality, a good campfire that burns all night long

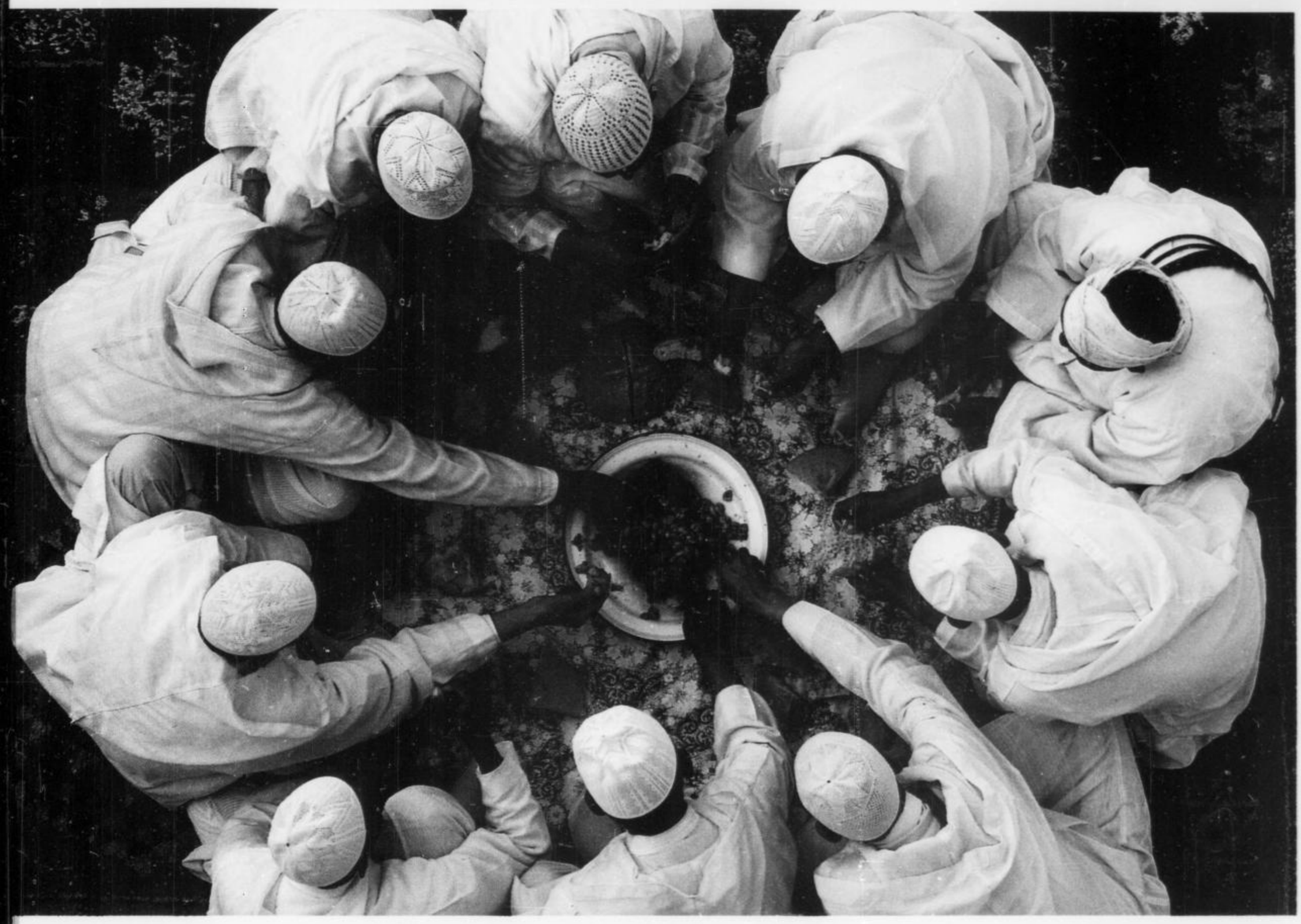
The desert poets are unstinting in their praise of those who lavish attention on their visitors and make sure that they lack nothing. But what they admire above all is not so much the abundance or daintiness of the feast offered to the guest, although these are fully appreciated, as the way in which the guest is received. Excellent hospitality must have a tangible and visible form. Its first sign is a good campfire, which the master of the tent keeps going all night so that travellers seeking shelter will know that a welcome awaits them. The fire must blaze so that it can be seen from afar. A generous host makes a second fire on a hilltop which lights up the desert like a lighthouse in an ocean of sand.

Harsh words are reserved for those who, through avarice, let their fire go out, deliberately extinguish it or prevent it from being seen so as to discourage visitors. If the servant responsible for keeping the fire alight falls asleep and lets it go out, the watchdog must take over and bark so that travellers know where to find the tent. Poets commend the qualities of such dogs whose barking attracts visitors. Yet sometimes even the silence of dogs can be favourably interpreted as evidence of the extreme hospitality of masters who receive guests so often that their dogs no longer bark, "indifferent to the approaching shadow" as one desert poet has put it.

But of course it falls primarily to the master of the tent to prove himself a worthy host. As soon as a visitor is announced, he rushes forward to invite him before the other members of the group. A smile on his lips, the host proffers greetings and words of welcome. He must not ask the visitor his name nor try to find out the purpose of his journey or how long he intends to stay. The only questions he can ask concern his guest's comfort. He must also make the visitor feel at home and be attentive and thoughtful, anxious to satisfy his every desire. The guest is invited to partake of a meal. The host waits upon him, without touching the food, encouraging his guest to eat, selecting the tastiest morsels for him, unwilling to leave him until such time as he expresses a desire to sleep. Every effort must be made to ensure that a guest leaves the clan fully satisfied with the hospitality he has received.

When a host wishes to show his esteem for a guest, he slaughters a camel in his honour. The importance he attaches to the guest is reflected in the size of the chosen animal, and much is made of the size of the pots in which the food is cooked. It would be most improper to kill a chicken, although farming people often do so. Only an animal of at least the size of a sheep is considered satisfactory. If a second important guest arrives, another animal is sacrificed. Blood must be shed, since it will be used to mark the





traveller's horse or camel with the distinctive sign of the clan that has welcomed him.

Bedouin hospitality

Nevertheless, the amount of food provided is not a criterion of hospitality, which is particularly appreciated when the person offering it is not well-to-do. Giving what one has and depriving oneself, and even one's family, is the golden rule of Arab hospitality. Théodore Lascaris, an emissary of Napoleon, and his Syrian dragoman Fathallah Sayigh were given shelter by a poor old widow of the Sardiyya Bedouin in Jordan, who slaughtered her one and only sheep in their honour. "Grandmother," they said to her, "why such waste?" To which she replied: "If you entered the dwelling of a living person and did not find hospitality there, it would be as though you had paid a visit to the dead."*

A guest of the Bedouin is at once a prince, a prisoner and a poet

The Arab poets who have so effusively sung the praises of the perfect host say almost nothing about the guest, considering him to have no more than a passive, secondary role. In fact, the conduct of the guest is also specifically governed by the desert code of honour.

He who receives hospitality, say the Bedouin, is at once an emir, a prisoner and a poet. He is above all a prince, for he is entitled to every consideration; but in return he must behave as befits one who is under an obligation. It is interesting to note that the verb *adâfa*, to extend hospitality, also means to add, to annex, to bind. He who is received is a prisoner of him who receives as he must comply in every respect with the instructions of his host. In particular, he must occupy the place assigned to him, be of pleasant disposition, not raise his voice and gratefully accept whatever is offered, even if it is no more than a bowl of curds. To refuse a specially prepared dish is to be suspected of harbouring hostile feelings towards one's host. It is incumbent on the guest to respect the dwelling into which he is received, to show deference towards the women and to refrain from any misdeed. Once he has taken his leave of the clan, his behaviour will be that of a poet: wherever he goes he will sing the praises of the house where he has been given hospitality and will testify to the consideration shown to him.

He who commits a culpable act such as theft, attempted seduction, or lying, violates the rules of hospitality and is dishonoured for ever. To emphasize the seriousness of the deed, the master of the tent seizes the dish in which the meal was

*Fathallah Sayigh, "Memoirs", an Arabic dialect manuscript preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. It was purchased by the French poet Alphonse de Lamartine during his travels in Syria in 1832. A French translation was published in vol. IV of Lamartine's *Voyage en Orient* (1832-1833).

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served, makes a hole in it and sends it to the clan of the offending guest. By this symbolic act he makes it known that the sacred laws of hospitality have been violated. Henceforth the culprit is treated with contempt. His testimony is refused, his company forsaken and every door is closed to him.

Arab hospitality makes for a special relationship between host and guest, entailing duties and rights. It is these legal implications that are its hallmark.

He who receives hospitality becomes an inviolable, near-sacred being whom the host, together with all the members of his family and indeed of his tribe, is required to protect. The guest must not be abandoned or delivered into the hands of his enemies, and no one is allowed to take revenge on him for a crime committed before he was admitted into the tent. What is more, the host still bears responsibility for his guest even after he has left the camp. So long as the bread and salt received in the tent are in the guest's stomach, he is entitled to the protection of the person who has given him shelter, unless in the meantime he has received hospitality elsewhere. This is what the Bedouin call "the right of salt". It provides the traveller with a kind of safe-conduct allowing him to travel freely and without fear in the lands subject to the jurisdiction of the host clan or of those who owe allegiance to that clan or have friendly relations with it.

Hospitality thus begets three fundamental rights, any infringement of which requires reparation: the right of the dwelling whose immunity

The delicate art of pouring mint tea

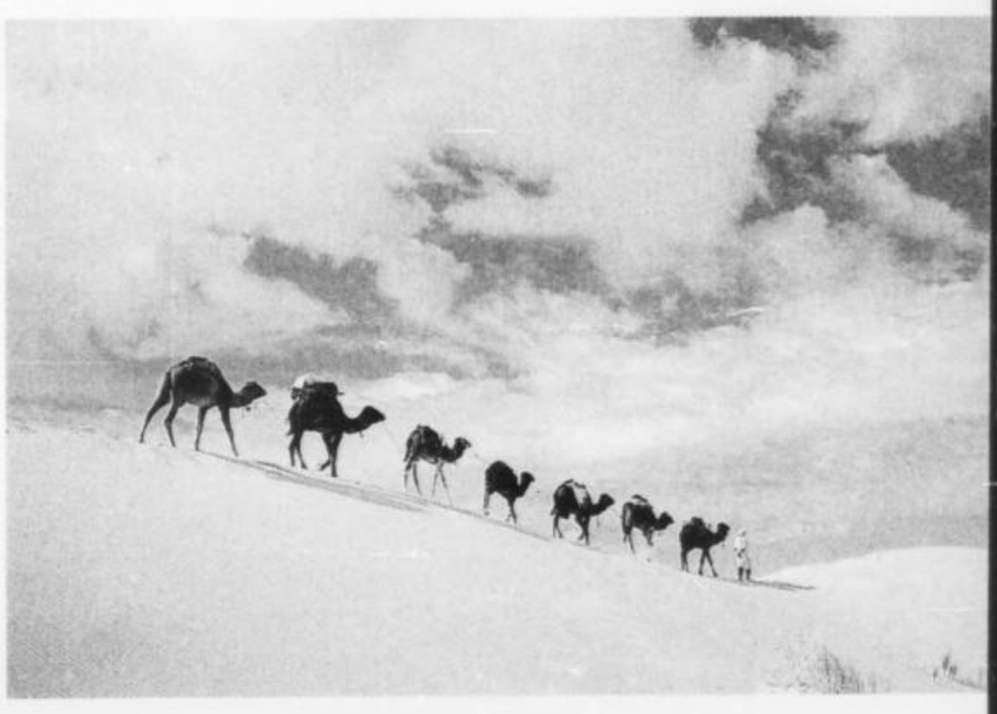
has been violated, the right of the host whose honour has been outraged, and the right of salt which has not been respected. Reparation, which is always substantial, is out of proportion to the offence, which may be insignificant: wounding words, a disagreeable allusion, an invidious gesture. Reparation lies wholly with the guest who must proclaim in three different dwellings, holding a white banner in his hand, that the honour of the master of the tent is intact and that "his face is white".

Of course city-dwellers and country folk also welcome strangers, but where they are concerned the duties of hospitality do not extend beyond the rules of courtesy. In Arab towns and cities no particular privilege or right accrues from the fact of sitting together around the same table.

Many are the occasions when an Arab invites his friends and neighbours to honour his table: a marriage, a birth, a circumcision (or baptism in the case of Christians), a pilgrim's return, the New Year, religious celebrations or anniversaries. But this kind of hospitality has little to do with customary rules of behaviour. It is a matter of social etiquette and neither rights nor duties are involved.

The customary rules of desert hospitality now seem to be dying out, even among the Bedouin whose numbers are steadily shrinking. With the possible exception of one indomitable group living on the edge of the Rub'-al-Khâli, the Bedouin world will soon be no more than a memory.

The desert is being conquered by mechanization and the dromedary is being ousted by the jeep. Arab hospitality, ever generous and courteous, is suffering the consequences. Hotels and stopovers are replacing the black tent of yesteryear, symbol of a time that regrettably is no more. Something nevertheless lingers on. Mindful still of pomp and ceremonial, which in his mind are indissociable from hospitality, the Arab will always be concerned about the "whiteness of his face", which he would be afraid of losing if he did not extend the warmest possible welcome to his guest. ■



'A desire to receive guests'

BY GEORGES LISOWSKI

HOSPITALITY seems to be a virtue—if that is the right word to describe it—more natural to a rural than to an urban civilization; and the Slavs of today are still very close to the rural civilization that their ancestors and even their parents knew.

In the city, asking for hospitality is begging, asking for charity. Why should a person ask hospitality from, say, the tenants of the apartment on the second floor, right, rather than from those of the third floor, left, or, indeed, from either of them, rather than go to the hotel opposite? In the countryside where inns are rare and journeys are long, requests for hospitality seem much more natural.

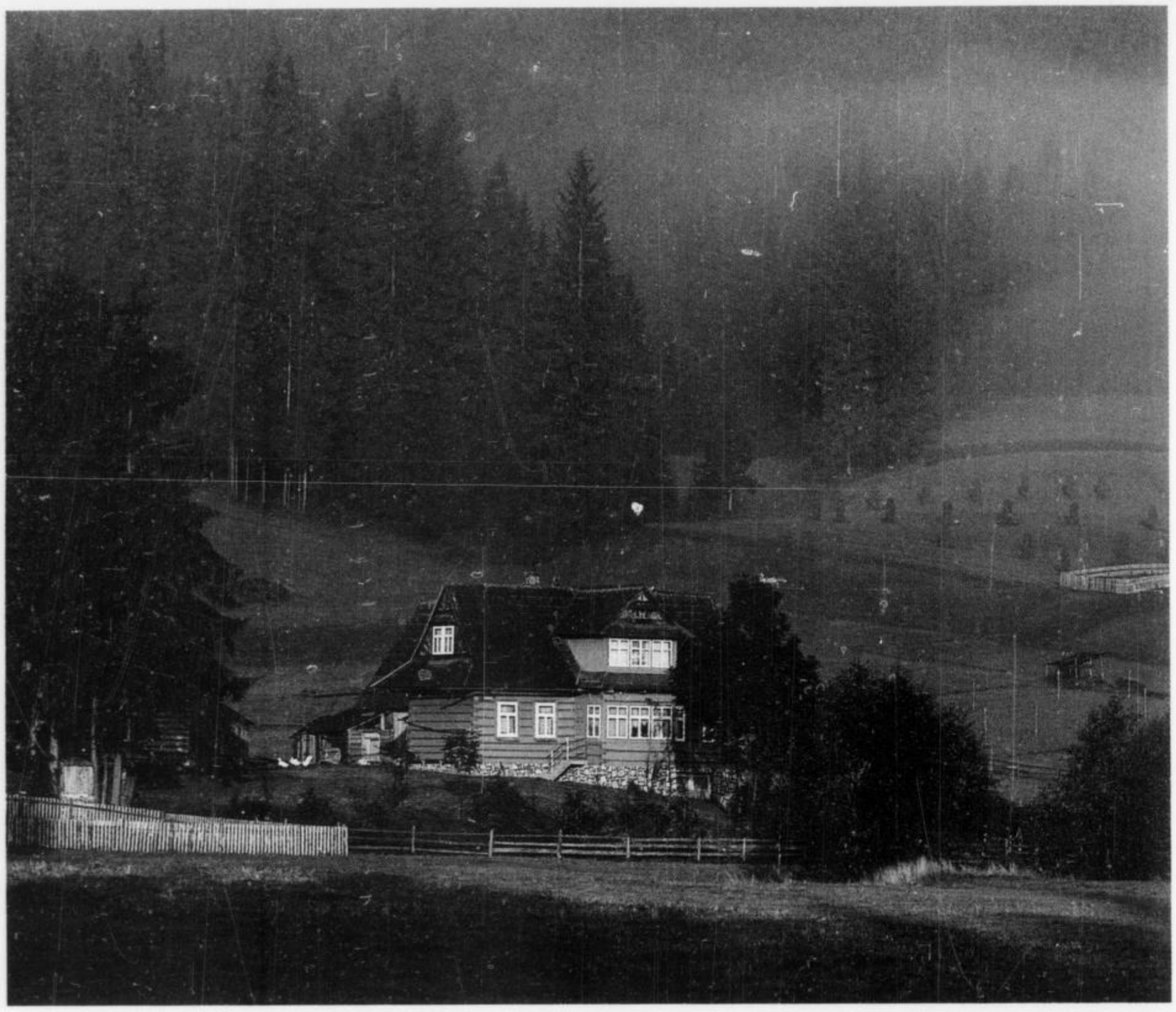
Since the beginning of this century we have lost all sense of distance. Space probes travel for years at thousands of kilometres an hour to take photographs of distant planets, and it is hard for us to imagine that at the beginning of the century, before the advent of the automobile, a day's journey was 40 kilometres. During my childhood, before the Second World War, this was still the case in eastern Poland. The nearest railway station was 80 kilometres away and, more often than not, the ancient bus would be under repair. It is in this context that Slav traditions of hospitality should be seen.

'Guests are like fish...'

In the *Linde*, the venerable dictionary of the Polish language, the word "hospitality" *(goscinnosc)* is defined delightfully and somewhat naively as "a desire to receive guests". It is a pretty conceit, is it not, the idea of a pleasure that one gives oneself, of a desire that one satisfies by being of service to others? This desire, however, was quite understandable in view of the relative isolation in which people lived, the boredom of their dreary autumn evenings and their curiosity about what was going on in the world at large. Visits were not limited to an hour or two, as they were in town. After spending a day getting to your neighbour's house, you would generally stay for two or three days, sometimes longer, despite the Latin saying that has become proverbial in some European languages: "Guests are like fish, after three days they stink".

Hospitality of this kind presupposes a certain

Music-making in the home of a Polish peasant family about 50 years ago



A farmhouse in the Tatra Mountains, southern Poland.

level of affluence. Practised between people of the same social standing, it was a phenomenon limited to a particular class and smacked more of sophisticated social intercourse than of charity. The Poland of old, of the days before the partitions, claimed to be "a republic of nobles". Unlike the other European feudal societies, Poland had an unusually high proportion of minor nobles. The higher aristocracy was very limited in number—apart from those of a few great princely families, all other titles such as count, marquis, baron or margrave were imported from abroad—but the nobility nevertheless accounted for about 10 per cent of the population and provided the electoral support of the various great aristocratic families.

Cutting a dash

All these petty squires, however, considered themselves to be the equals of the king. At times they were barely distinguishable from their peasant neighbours, yet even the most impoverished of them nurtured the highest ambitions. The snobbery of this social class and its attachment to appearances have had a marked influence, right up to today, on its more or less direct successor, the Polish intelligentsia.

The virtue of hospitality was cultivated with fervour in the country residences, the manor houses and modest country seats of this petty

Interior of a farmhouse in Little Poland.

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Members of an aristocratic family photographed with some of their staff outside a manor near Cracow.

nobility. It was a hospitality which sometimes reached embarrassing levels. It was not unknown for the wheels of the coaches in which the guests had arrived to be removed and hidden in outhouses so that it was impossible for them to leave. On special occasions—that is to say, not only at baptisms, weddings and burials but also during visits of guests, whether planned or unexpected—the normally frugal way of life gave way to the heights of extravagance.

Appearances were what mattered! A well-known Polish saying, still current today, might be translated as "Run up debts, but show that you can". On festive occasions people ate and drank until they were fit to burst.

Poles still often like to provide hospitality beyond their means. An English journalist who visited Poland a few years ago summed up his impressions in these words: "In my country, the shops are full and there are no shortages, but when you visit people, the table is bare. In your country, there is a crisis and everything is in short supply, but when you go visiting, the tables are groaning with food." Run up debts, but show that you can!

To be fair, Slav hospitality is not just a matter of feasting and is not only inspired by curiosity about the local news. It is heartfelt, truly cordial, perhaps a little naive and conventional, but totally sincere. Give an honest answer to a Frenchman who asks "Comment allez-vous?", or to an Englishman who says "How do you do?" and they will both be terribly embarrassed. A Slav will be equally embarrassed if you reply to his query about your health with a conventional "ça va", or "fine".

The third time of asking

Slav hospitality is highly ceremonious. It is not enough for the hosts to place everything available in the house on the table and for the guests to set about these offerings eagerly. The hosts must insist several times that the guests help themselves to what is offered. The guests, in their turn, must politely refuse at least three times. This routine must be followed so as to demonstrate the sincerity of the hosts and the good manners of the guests.

The hold of this ceremonial is still strong today, even within families. When my father used to dine with me, he would be quite prepared to go to bed hungry if I did not insist strongly enough that he should eat. Eventually it became a joke. "Don't stand on ceremony in my house!" "But I'm not standing on ceremony." "All right, then, one, two, three, I insist three times that you take some more." "No, no, no, I couldn't", he would reply before helping himself to some food which he obviously wanted. Even with his own son, the custom was too strong for him.

African

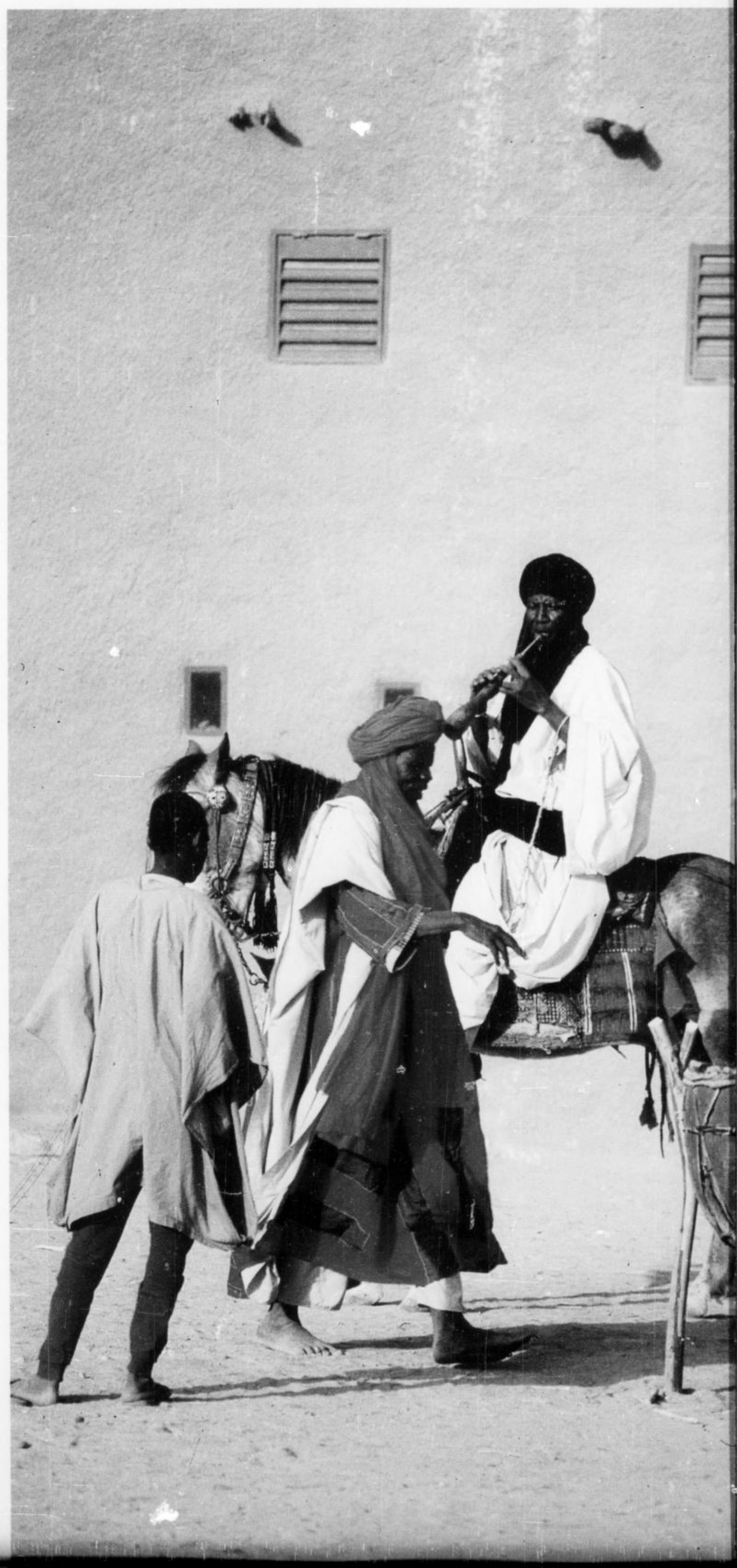
This extravagant, at times wearisome, Slav hospitality shows tinges of oriental influences. Oriental hospitality, based on religious prohibitions, is less convivial and has a certain aggressive quality. While he is under your roof, the guest is free to do as he pleases, even to the extent, so it is said, of taking your wife or your daughter to his bed—a form of hospitality that I have never sampled; but once he has stepped outside your door, you are at liberty to murder him in cold blood.

I once had a taste of oriental hospitality in Georgia. It was truly phenomenal. On the first day, sated, replete, made much of, you feel that you are in paradise. On the second day, you are still in paradise, but you say to yourself that if things go on like this they will finish you off. On the third, there are no two ways about it—either you leave or you've had it.

A Danish welcome

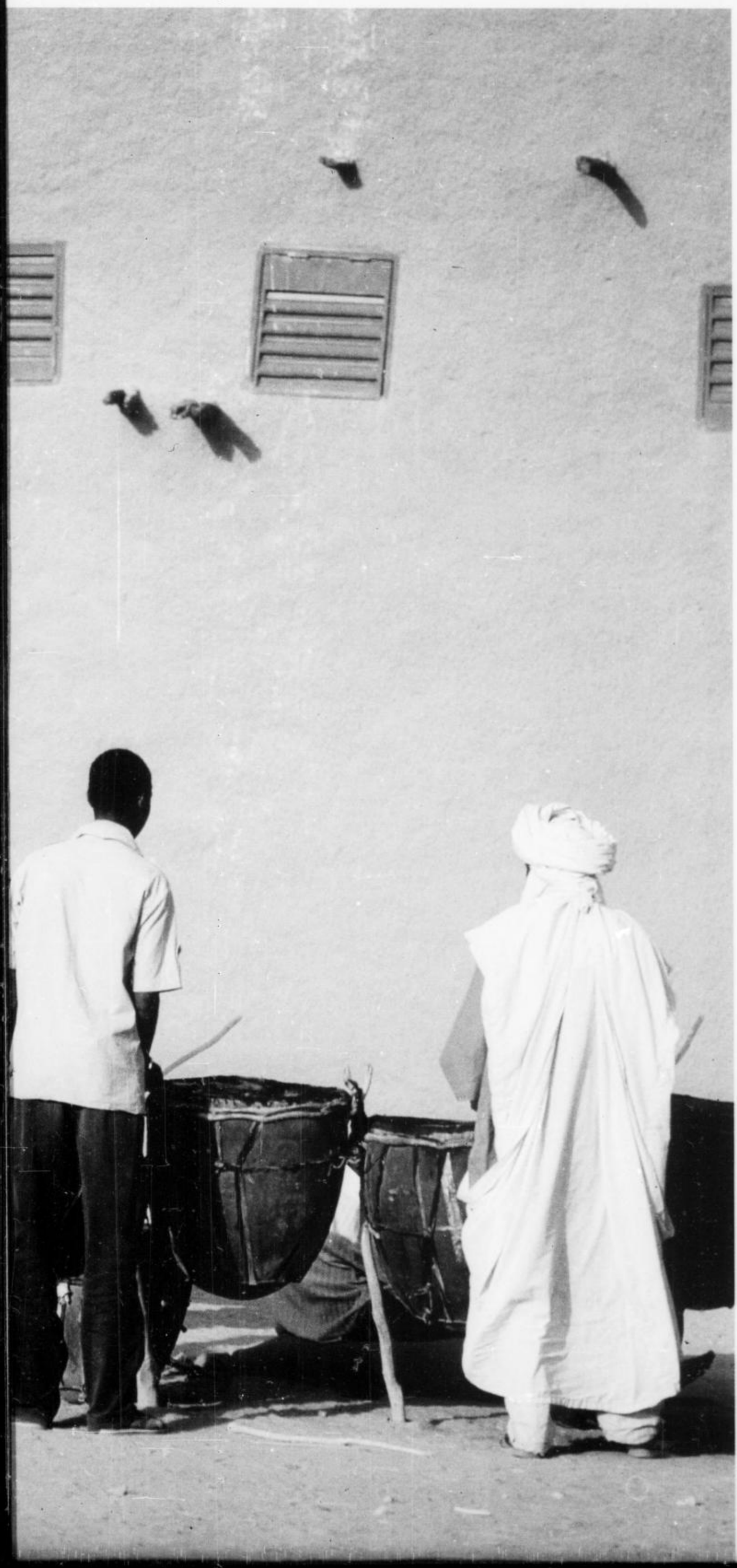
The most moving experience of hospitality I have ever had, however, occurred neither in a Slav country nor in the Orient, but in Copenhagen. I arrived there one Saturday, just before midnight, on the eve of a big football match between Malmö and Copenhagen. Half Sweden had arrived on the ferry and not even the smallest broom-cupboard was available in any of the hotels. The tourist office—open at midnight—had compiled a list of addresses of families who had offered to put up visitors with nowhere to go.

I ended up at about one o'clock in the morning in the home of people who had risen from their beds, run me a bath and placed sandwiches on the table for me, to the accompaniment of great gestures of friendship—and all this without a word being exchanged, since they knew none of the languages in which I could manage a few stumbling phrases. I stayed with them for two days and, when the time came for me to leave, they got together a few friends to give a party in my honour, still communicating with sign language, since their friends were no better linguists than they were. They refused to let me pay for the room and I had to go back to the tourist office and leave the money there. Yet no one ever talks about Danish hospitality. Now I have tried to make amends. Forty years later I have repaid my debt. ■



hospitality — a dying tradition?

BY BABACAR FALL



SOLIDARITY is a salient characteristic of traditional African societies even though they are organized into hierarchies in which everyone's place is determined by social status. Solidarity unites families linked by ties of blood, as well as groups living in the same area, belonging to the same village community, and sharing the same system of values.

But this solidarity may also be extended to persons outside the group or community. It fosters mobility and offers an opportunity to develop sociability. This is why, throughout Africa, strangers are treated with respect and courtesy. The old folk say that the true griot* is the stranger who later praises his host's family to the skies.

A hearty welcome beneath the palaver tree

Among the Baulé of Côte d'Ivoire strangers are warmly welcomed without any questions being asked about the purpose of their visit. Hospitality is discreet, salutations courteous: "Welcome, here you are at home". A seat is offered, and water in a coconut shell. After the visitor has had time to relax and recover from the strain of the journey, the head of the family invites him to eat. Seated in the open air or on the veranda, the guest is asked to dip his hand into a dish of yams and okra sauce. More dishes follow: chicken, walnut sauce and other specialities.

The meal is followed by a rest in the courtyard or in the main room of the dwelling. Palm wine is served, conversation starts up and becomes animated, words flow spontaneously. Parables, tales, proverbs and legends enliven the conversation in a cheerful atmosphere which helps the guest to feel really at home.

The visitor is then taken for a stroll through the village where he is welcomed by the chief or one of the notables with mock solemnity,

Musicians prepare to welcome visitors outside the sultan's palace at Agadez (Niger).

beneath the palaver tree. He is offered another jar of palm wine, a sign of the high esteem in which he is held. The jar is handed around so that everyone can be associated with the welcome extended to the guest.

In the Sahel, hospitality is a family affair

The hospitality of the Sahelians is even more effusive. Because of the inadequacy or absence of communication facilities in the Sahel, visitors always arrive unannounced. But as soon as they are sighted, people go to meet them. After a joyful and spontaneous exchange of greetings and hugs, they are relieved of their bags. Children are the first to honour this tradition.

This lengthy exchange of greetings is characteristic of Sahelian cultures. For some Tukulor or Wolof peoples the act of salutation is the first and most noble form of courtesy, giving immediate cheer and inspiring the greatest friendship. According to one saying, it is even compulsory to greet an enemy, since greeting others properly is an indication of one's own self-esteem.

In the early 1940s, a Dakar student wrote the following description of the welcome extended to a visitor by the people of Baol, in central Senegal: "The guest is received in the hut of his closest kin. He is given the place of honour, which is in the middle of the bed. Friends and relatives have to be introduced and, sitting on mats, they engage the newcomer in conversation. One of the daughters of the house offers him cool water and, if the guest has arrived on horseback, a young man takes care of his animal. During this time a slave brings water in a jar, which is placed within the enclosure where shortly afterwards the visitor goes and washes himself." When a guest was fully rested, he was offered two kola nuts, one red and the other white, so that he could choose according to his preference.

In fact, hospitality is nearly always a family affair in the broad sense. The guest is welcomed by everyone. He is then looked after by people of his own age. As soon as his arrival is announced, members of his age-group make contact with him at his host's dwelling. As words of greeting lead on to conversation, the chain of friendship grows longer. At mealtime dishes are sent to him and he is invited in turn to visit each of his new friends. He is expected to show that he has eaten well, failing which he is liable to be severely reproached for behaving "like a stranger". These receptions give rise to some competition between families. Every effort is made to please the guest, who responds courteously to all these attentions. In addition he distributes provisions of his own, usually produce from home.

At whatever time the visitor arrives, he is always offered something to eat so that he can restore his strength after the journey. If the head of the family is rich he shows his guest how happy he is to receive him by offering him an animal (a sheep or a goat) which will be sacrificed and prepared in his honour.

'On the third day, give him a tool'

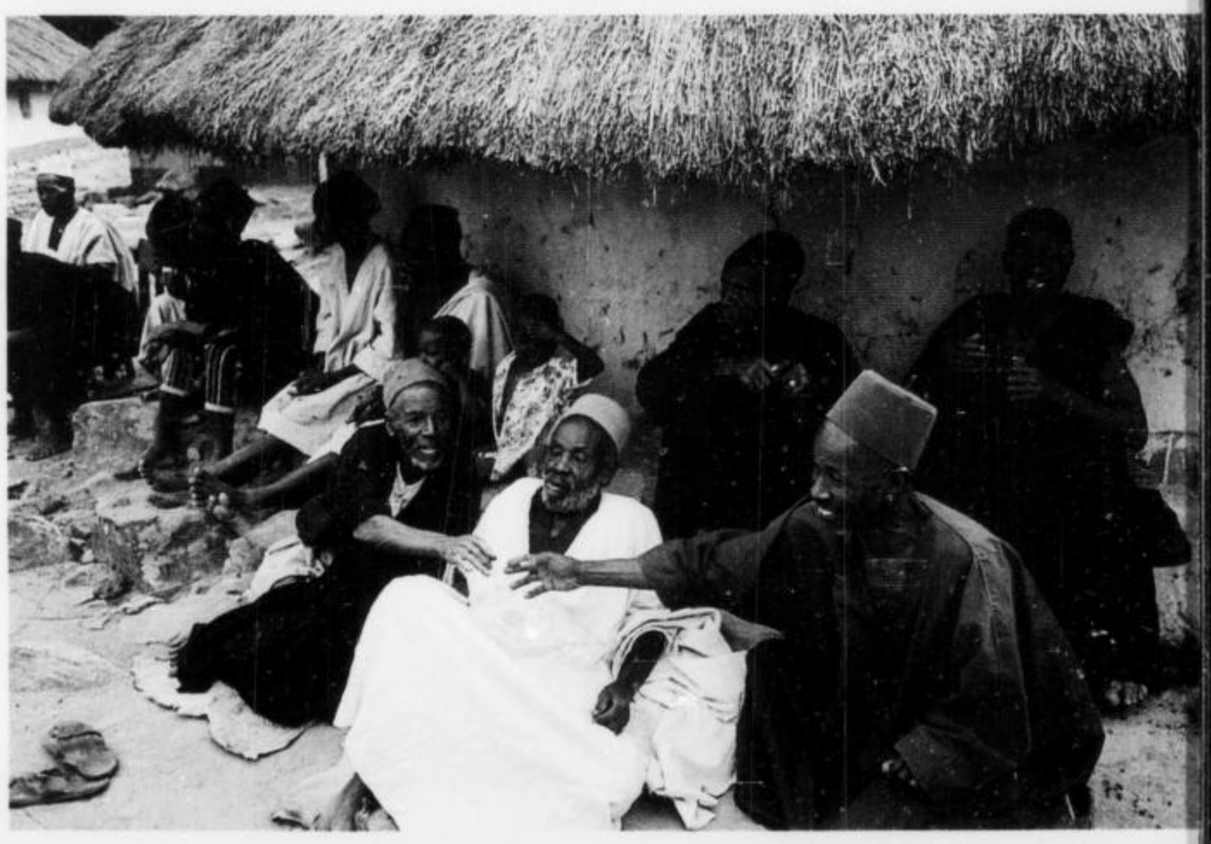
Among the Tukulor, a hospitable people who live in the Senegal river basin, guests are sheltered and fed as well as possible, provided that they do not outstay their welcome. The Tukolor put into practice a dictum set forth by former Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere: "When a stranger arrives, feed him for two days; on the third day, give him a tool." This rule being generally understood and accepted, abuses are rare.

The length of the stay usually depends on the age of the guest and the nature of his visit, and varies from a week to a month. Preparations are then made for the return journey. The day of departure is set after lengthy negotiations.

Portrait of a Wolof griot by the Senegalese painter Gora M'Bengue

Below left, preparing rice for a festive occasion

Below, villagers of the Côte d'Ivoire's Yakuba people watch a ritual dance.



A palaver at Bardaï, an oasis in the Tibesti region of northern Chad

Provisions are collected together along with gifts and messages for the traveller and for relatives living in his village. The departure is marked by ceremonial. The marabout is consulted—some days are auspicious, others are not. Wednesdays and Fridays are often avoided.

Dying traditions

But traditions of hospitality are dying out as a result of growing urbanization. Neighbourliness is less common, and outside their home area strangers encounter greater difficulties.

Modernization is playing havoc with the patterns of community life. African cities are expanding considerably as a result of population growth, but also because of a nonstop exodus from the rural areas. Individualism is prevailing over community spirit.

For a number of reasons, the extended family is gradually breaking up and giving way to the nuclear family. This loosening of the bonds of kinship tends to lead to "me first" attitudes and, with the economic crisis also playing a part, generosity and open-handedness are dying out.

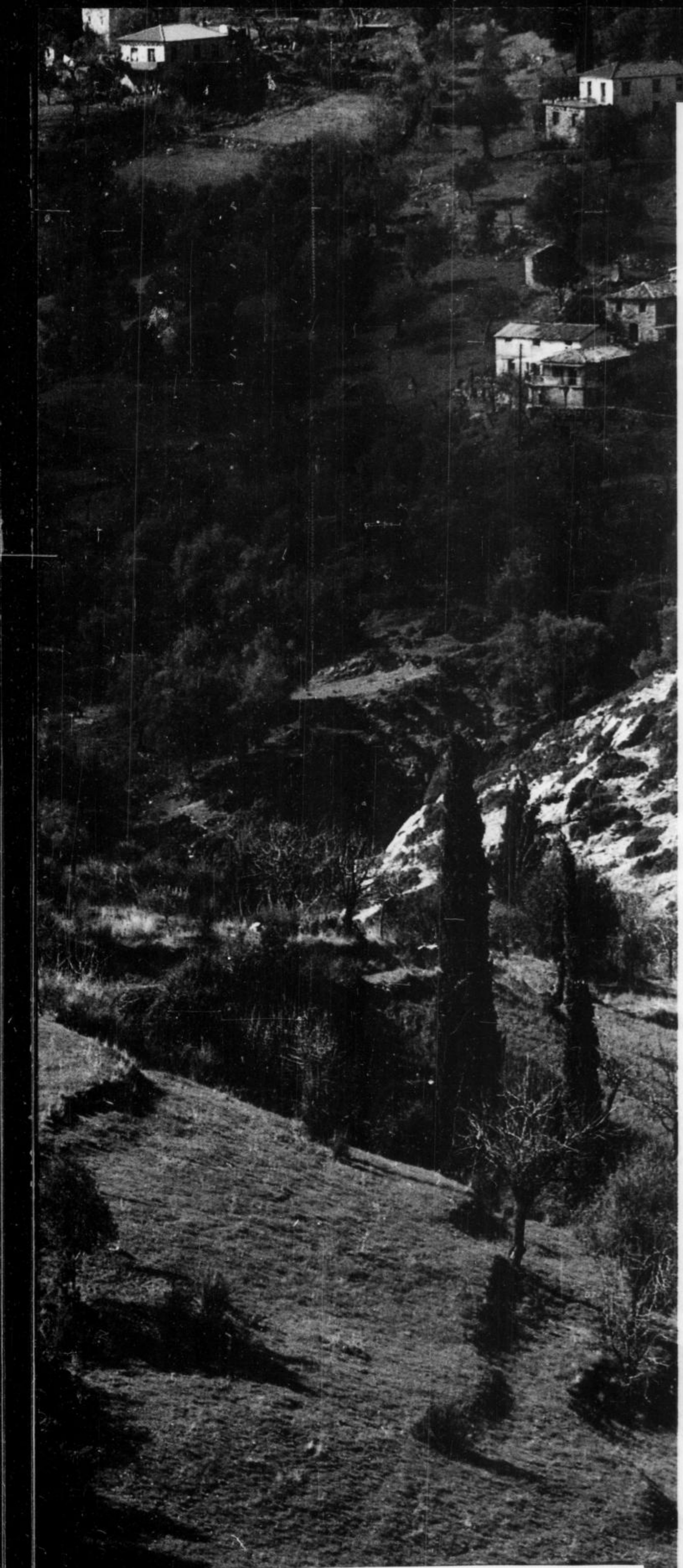
Africans living outside their own countries are often the hardest hit. Foreigners are increasingly accused of responsibility for the problems besetting some countries that are labouring under economic difficulties. Sometimes people from neighbouring countries are subjected to mass expulsions.

Yet hospitality, which was once universally respected, was one of the founding ideals of African unity in the wake of independence. On the basis of these traditions of hospitality, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights provides for the protection of the nationals of other countries. Article 12 thus stipulates that "A non-national legally admitted in a territory of a state party to the present Charter may only be expelled from it by virtue of a decision taken in accordance with the law". Paragraph 5 of that article declares that: "The mass expulsion of non-nationals shall be prohibited."

Unfortunately, these provisions have on occasion been violated. Nationalism in the narrow sense militates against the values of tolerance, openness and self-respect that have since time immemorial characterized relations with those who came from afar in the hope of being given a welcome such as they might find in their own homes. Is this waning of the traditions of hospitality symptomatic of a crisis in society? ■

BABACAR FALL,
of Senegal, teaches at the Cheik Anta Diop University, Dakar.

*In the Sudano-Sahelian area, the griot is both a troubadour, a bringer of news and a witness to the present and to the past.



Where 'foreigner' means 'guest'

BY ANDRÉ KÉDROS

YEARS ago, a French friend of mine told me of a memorable experience he once had while on holiday in the Peloponnese.

"I was on my way to the Taiyetos Mountains," he said. "The sun was setting when my car broke down near a remote and poor village. Cursing my misfortune, I was wondering where I was going to spend the night when I realized that the villagers who had gathered around me were vehemently arguing as to who should have the honour of receiving me as a guest in their house. Finally, thinking that I would cause less disturbance to her than I would to a man with a family, I accepted the offer of an old peasant woman who lived alone in a little house surrounded by a courtyard at the edge of the village. While she was getting me settled into a tiny but clean and freshly whitewashed room, the mayor of the village was hitching up his mule to my car to haul it to a small town some 20 kilometres away where there was a garage.

"I had noticed three hens running free in my hostess's courtyard and that night one of them ended up in a stew on my table. Other villagers brought me goat's cheese, figs and honey, and, of course, some ouzo. I ate with a hearty appetite and, despite my ignorance of the language, we drank together and made merry till far into the night. The following day, the garage man brought back my car which he had patched up. The engine seemed to be running as well as ever. He presented me with a very reasonable bill and with a request that I should drop him off at his home town on my way.

"When the time came for me to say goodbye to my friends in the village, I wanted to

A typical springtime landscape in the Peloponnese. Inset, polychrome earthenware relief of Odysseus and Penelope (5th century BC).

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reward the old woman for the trouble to which I had put her and for the hen she had sacrificed for me. She refused the money I offered with loud cries of indignation. The more I insisted, the more vexed she appeared. I too was embarrassed and upset. I still am. Do you think I should send her a present from Paris?"

"Do nothing of the kind," I said. "Greek hospitality is not for sale."

Homeric times

Greek hospitality is part of a long tradition. In Homeric times it was considered a sacred duty. When Telemachus left Ithaca in secret in search of Odysseus, he and his companions were greeted on the shore at Pylos by Nestor and his sons who were celebrating the festival of Poseidon. They were immediately invited to join in the festivities. Not until they had eaten and rested did Nestor declare: "Only now that they have tasted the pleasures of food is it fitting to ask the strangers who they are."

Telemachus and his men enjoyed similar discreet hospitality from the hands of Menelaus. On learning that Telemachus was the son of his former brother-in-arms, the king showered him with sumptuous gifts. These Telemachus refused, but in the end, so as not to offend his host, he accepted a silver vase and a scarf woven by Helen.

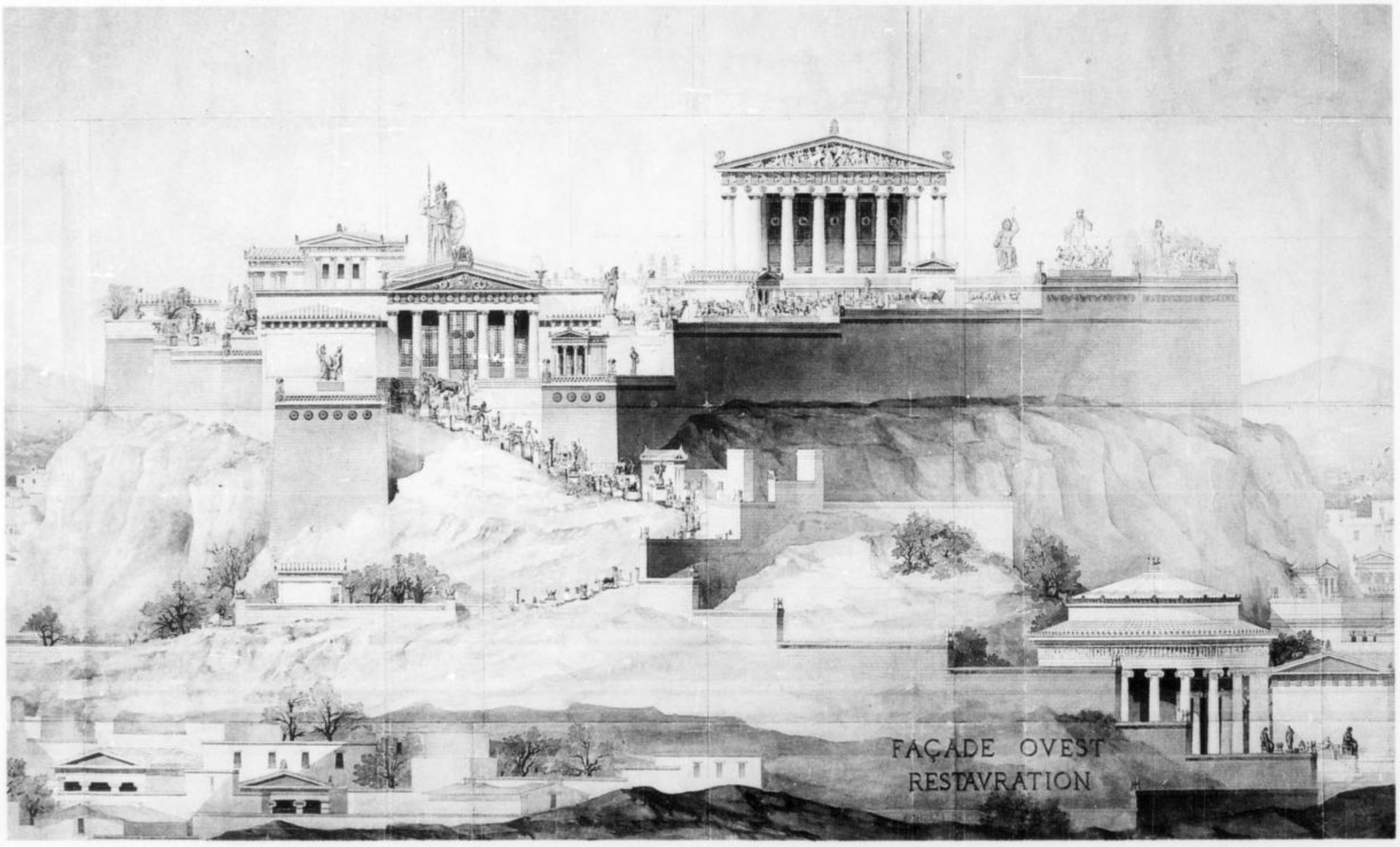
Meanwhile, Odysseus himself, having braved the tempest brought down upon him by his sworn enemy, Poseidon, was cast ashore on the island of Scheria, naked and with nothing to indicate who he was. Nevertheless, he was received with great courtesy by Nausicaa and her father Alcinous, king of the Phaeacians, who promised him a ship to take him home even before Odysseus had made himself known. It was only after the bard Demodocus had greatly moved him by singing of the Trojan horse that Odysseus disclosed his identity and told his hosts of his adventures and his wanderings.

Landing at Ithaca, where suitors were laying siege to the virtuous Penelope and squandering his wealth, Odysseus, aided by the goddess Athena, disguised himself as a beggar and, in accordance with the laws of hospitality, was received at the palace. He was treated with scorn by the suitors, but Penelope made ready to wash his feet. This Odysseus refused to allow and the task was undertaken by his old nurse Euryclea who, as she did so, recognized her master by an old scar from his boyhood.

The Golden Age of Athens

During the fifth century BC, free citizens and slaves accounted for only half the population of Athens. The remainder were foreigners. Most of these "immigrant" Athenians were Greeks from elsewhere, but they included many Phoenicians, Phrygians, Egyptians and Scythians. They were not fully-fledged citizens and could neither be elected to the Assembly nor become judges. In other words, they took no direct part in the political affairs of the city.

Nevertheless, their presence was more than



The Acropolis of Athens *(1877) by the French painter Marcel Lambert (1847-1928). The work is an imaginary recreation of the west façade of the Acropolis as it was at the time of Pericles (5th century BC).*

merely tolerated and they enjoyed considerable rights. Businessmen and craftsmen were allowed to set up shop and to employ workers or slaves. Armourers such as Cephalos and bankers such as Lysias—both natives of Syracuse—painters like Polygnotus of Thasos and doctors like Hippocrates of Cos, professors of oratory such as Protagoras of Thrace and Gorgias of Sicily, were all free to exercise their professions without hindrance and to enjoy the prestige that their excellence merited. As Pericles proudly boasted to Thucydides: "Our city is open to all. No laws keep foreigners away or exclude them from the education or the entertainments available here." This is all the more understandable since Pericles himself had Anaxagoras of Clazomenae as his counsellor and the renowned Aspasia of Miletus as his mistress.

The Greek tradition of hospitality, and the spirit of tolerance that went with it, continued down the centuries, to be found in other guises in the Middle Ages in the Byzantine empire.

Foreigners who abused their privileges

To build Constantinople, the emperor Constantine called in 40,000 German workers. When the task was completed, these foreign workers were granted the right to remain and gradually merged into the local population. The same was true of the Goths, Vandals, Armenians, Persians, Moors and Ethiopians who had served in Justinian's army. In the tenth century, the ranks of the imperial armies were full of Russians, Scandinavians, Khazars, Petchenegs, Georgians and—after the Battle of Hastings and the conquest of England by the Normans—Anglo-Saxons. Most of these mercenaries finally settled in Byzantium. Under the Comnenian dynasty (1081-1180), all these foreigners, almost equal in numbers to the original Greeks, had become completely assimilated, a fact that can only be explained by the enduring Greek tradition of hospitality.

Some foreigners were, unfortunately, to abuse that hospitality. From the time of the First Crusade, Bohemond and his men, who had asked Alexius Comnenus for the right of passage through Asia Minor, behaved with callous lack of restraint in Constantinople. Alexius' daughter Anne relates in her memoirs how they would burst into the palace at all hours and how the emperor did nothing to restrain them for fear that they would attack his people and damage his property. Later, the Byzantine capital was sacked by the unbridled soldiery of the Fourth Crusade.

Venice too became involved in these scandalous abuses. To reward the Venetians for having helped him in his struggle with the Normans, Alexius Comnenus had allowed them to set up trading centres in certain districts of Constantinople. Showing scant respect for the duties they owed in return for the hospitality offered to them and relying on the naval might of their native city, the Venetians in Byzantium soon established a state within a state. The Comnenians tried to get rid of them by playing on the rivalries between Venice, Genoa and Pisa. The remedy, however, proved worse than the disease. The Pisans and the Genoese extorted similar exorbitant privileges from the Comnenians, and rivalled the Venetians in their arrogance.

Byzantium's over-generous hospitality certainly appears to have precipitated the empire's decline. To open one's doors to the foreigner may be a virtue, but it should not be done indiscriminately. Hospitality may cost you dear when the foreigner takes advantage of it to place a knife at your throat.

After the fall of Constantinople, in 1453,

Telemachus lands on Calypso's island. Engraving from an 18th-century edition of **Télémaque**, *a romance by the French bishop Fénelon (1651-1715) which is based on the adventures of Telemachus in search of his father, Odysseus.*

ANDRÉ KÉDROS
is a Greek author who writes in French. He has published thirteen novels, which have been translated into as many languages, and several historical essays including a study of the Greek Resistance from 1940 to 1944 (1956, Robert Laffont publishers, Paris).

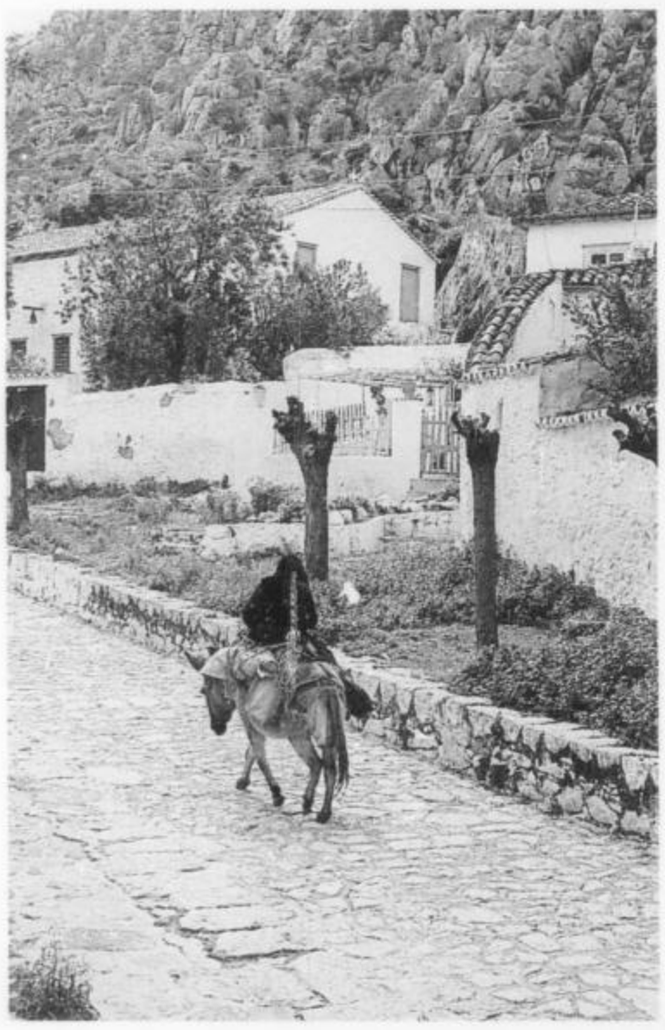
Greece suffered four centuries of Turkish occupation. Throughout this period the Greeks of the mountains offered refuge to "Klephts" (thieves) when they were pursued by the authorities. These Klephts were, in fact, members of the resistance fighting the army of occupation. The hospitality they were thus given was strongly coloured by a sense of national solidarity and a deep longing for liberty.

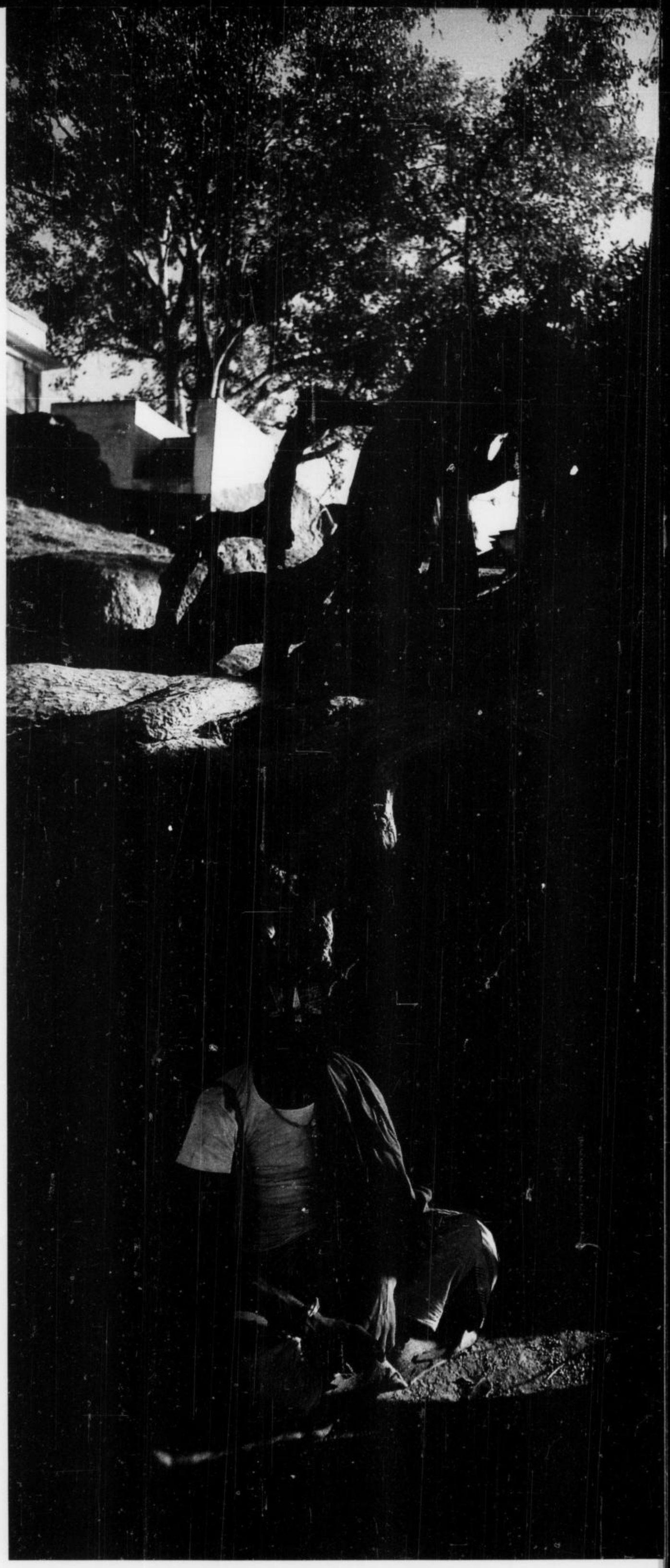
During the Second World War, the nazis responded to mass demonstrations (such as that during which the ministry of labour was stormed, forcing Hitler to abandon the idea of imposing forced labour on the Greeks) by sealing off whole districts and making police round-ups. Thousands of resistance fighters were saved on these occasions by slipping through doors opportunely opened by friends, who would take them in and shelter them.

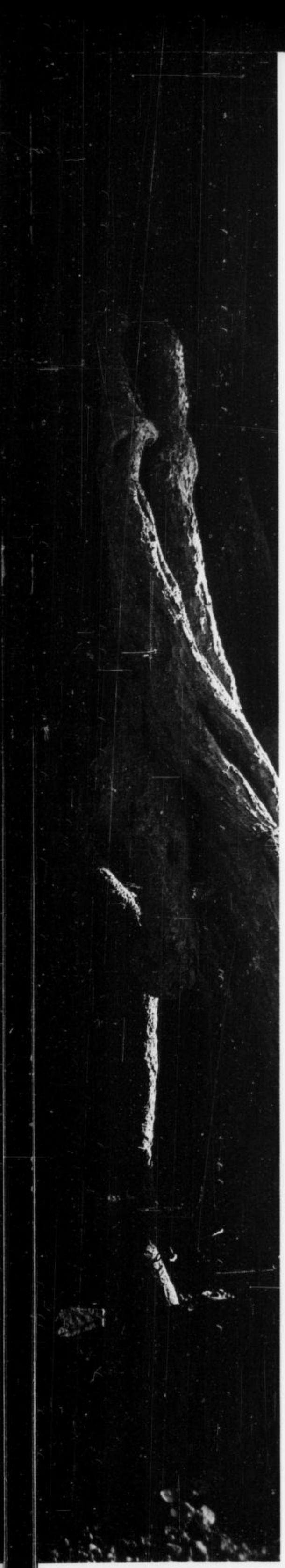
The fall of Mussolini also gave rise to a number of hospitable actions. Many Italian officers and soldiers, themselves former occupiers of Greece, decided to make a break with Hitler's forces. They deserted and were hunted down by the nazis and in some cases massacred. Overlooking the fact that the Italians had been their enemies during the Albanian war and had often treated them with brutal repression, the Greeks hid them and provided them with civilian clothing and with food. Thanks to this hospitality, thousands of Italians managed to survive until the liberation.

Even today, the Greek word "xenos" means both "foreigner" and "guest". ■

Time-honoured mode of transport on the Greek island of Hydra







Krupa Sindhu and the beggar

BY PRAFULLA MOHANTI

HOSPITALITY is natural in my village. Guests arrive at any time of the day or night and they are always welcome. Nobody asks them "Why have you come?" or "How long are you going to stay?". They become a part of the family.

Providing hospitality for strangers is a religious act. A stranger should never leave the village displeased. Who knows, he may be Vishnu, God the Preserver, in disguise.

Stories are told to children to teach them to be kind and hospitable to strangers: "Once upon a time there was a Brahmin. His name was Krupa Sindhu. He was married, but had no children. He was kind, religious, and so generous that he gave all his wealth away to the poor. A time came when he and his wife had nothing to eat.

"One day his wife said, 'We have no relatives. You must ask a friend to help, otherwise how can we manage? There's no food in the house.'

"Krupa Sindhu replied, 'I have a friend who could help us but he lives in a distant place. If I went to see him he might solve our problem.'

"It was decided that Krupa Sindhu would visit his friend. His wife borrowed some rice from a neighbour's house and she made ten *pithas* (rice cakes). She divided them into two equal portions, one for her husband to eat on his journey and one for herself.

"Lord Vishnu knew this. To test the Brahmin couple's devotion he came to their house disguised as an old man. 'I haven't eaten anything for many days,' he said in a trembling voice. 'Please give me something to eat.'

"When the Brahmin couple looked at him their hearts were filled with compassion. They felt it was their duty to look after the stranger. They invited him into their house as their guest and the Brahmin's wife gave her portion of the *pithas* to the old man to eat.

"Lord Vishnu knew there were only ten *pithas* in Krupa Sindhu's house and that his wife had given him her portion. He wanted to test the hospitality of the Brahmin couple further, so he asked for more.

"The Brahmin's wife gave him Krupa Sindhu's portion and Lord Vishnu ate one more *pitha*. That left four which the Brahmin's wife kept for her husband's journey, and they both went without food.

"Lord Vishnu was pleased with their devotion but wanted to test them even further. 'I'm so weak, I have no strength to walk. Can I spend the night in your house?' he asked.

"Without hesitation they offered the old man shelter for the night and gave him the remaining four *pithas* for his supper. They only drank water.

"During the night they discussed the problems of the old man. 'He's so old and weak, if we had enough money and food we could keep him in our house and nurse him.'

"Lord Vishnu knew what the Brahmin couple were saying and blessed them. In the morning when Krupa Sindhu and his wife got up they were amazed. Their mud house had changed into a palace and the old man had disappeared. They realized what had happened and knelt down to pray to Lord Vishnu for his kindness."

Money is only the means to an end. Life ends at Baikuntha, the Land of the Gods. Everybody wants to go there but only those with *punya* (piety) succeed. There is a saying in the state of Orissa:

Dhana arjane dharma kari
Dharme prapata narahari.
"The aim of wealth is to follow dharma
And only through dharma can God be reached."

People spend their lives following dharma—doing good works, helping others in every way. Hospitality plays a major part. Planting trees to provide shade and fruit for travellers, digging wells for drinking water, giving food and shelter to the poor, are typical good works. Many of the *dharmasalas* (rest houses) in India have been built by the wealthy as an act of hospitality.

The villagers are delighted to receive guests. They are fed, clothed and given presents. When guests arrive they are offered a pot of water to wash their hands, face and feet. Then they are given either a mat or a chair to sit on. Previously sherbet was offered, but now it is the custom to give a cup of tea, depending on the time of day. Guests are never asked "Have you eaten?" or "Would you like something to eat or drink?". Food is placed before them and it is impolite for the guests to refuse. Hospitality means giving yourself completely to guests and strangers. ■

PRAFULLA MOHANTI
is an Indian writer and painter whose classic book *My Village, My Life* (1973), an evocation of the Indian village in the state of Orissa where he was born and brought up, has been translated into Japanese, Norwegian and Danish. Among his other published works are *Through Brown Eyes* (1985), a pen-portrait of the English as he saw them after he went to England to work as an architect in 1960. His latest book, *Changing Village, Changing Life*, will be published later this year.

Land of a thousand and one courtesies

BY
YANN RICHARD

An Islamic tradition handed down by the Persian poets tells how Abraham, not wishing to eat alone, once sought to share his meal with an old man he met in the desert. When the time came to pray, he realized that his guest was a Zoroastrian and wanted to send him away. But an angel restrained Abraham, saying, "God has fed this man for a hundred years, how could you refuse him a meal?"

Strangers are invariably surprised by the ceremonial that unfolds before them on a visit to an Iranian household. Whatever the time of day or night, whatever the reason for the visit or the social status of the visitor, a drink will be offered first of all. To enter someone's house is like coming to the end of a journey through the dust of the desert and slaking one's thirst in a garden.

Usually the tea is prepared in the Russian manner, left to brew for a long time in a teapot standing on a samovar and served with added water in small glasses. Sugar is not added to the tea but placed on the tongue. Sweetmeats are always provided to accompany the golden liquid. Each town has its own speciality, such as tamarisk jellies, sugared almonds flavoured with the essence of Egyptian willow, assorted baklavas (nut and honey pastries) from Yazd, all kinds of biscuits, some flavoured with jasmine, others stuffed with walnuts, pistachios or almonds...

In summer, to alleviate the torrid heat of the road, cool syrups made from melon or watermelon juice are served on arrival. The accomplished hostess can blend the colours and flavours of different fruits in the most unexpected ways.

Don't think that you can drop in on someone and then quietly slip away as soon as your business is concluded. In face of the sometimes excessively polite formulas used by the master of the house when he insists that you stay to eat (in the case of an unexpected visit it is good manners not to accept too quickly), you must decide for yourself what common courtesy requires. Even if there is little to talk about, a visit should not last less than an hour, otherwise your friends will be offended by the implication that they have failed to entertain you properly.

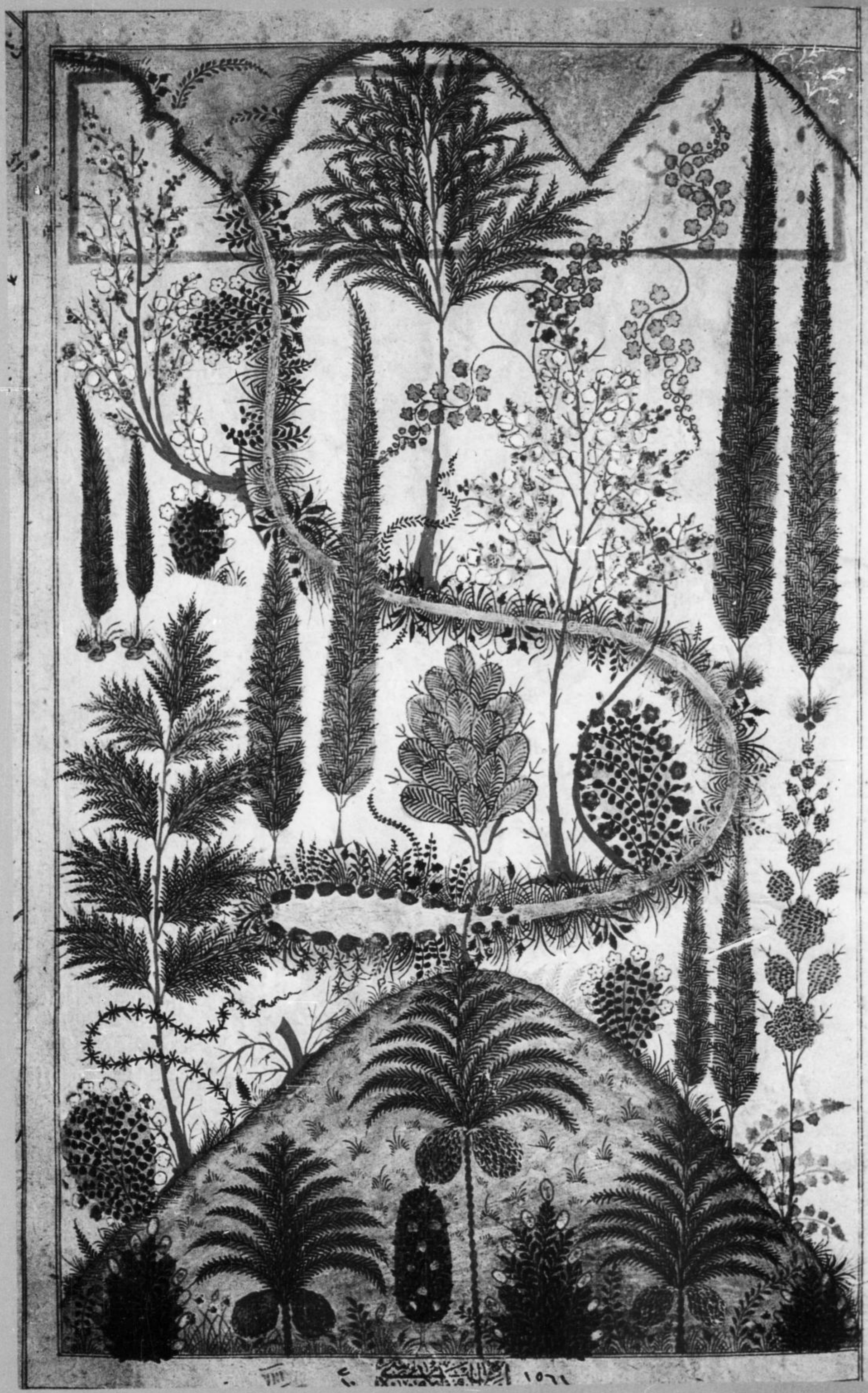
Conversation follows a ritual course, beginning with mutual inquiries about matters of health. At first bad news is avoided, and it is only broached after a decent interval in order to spare people's feelings. Depending on the closeness of the friendship between them, people either discuss general topics or more personal matters. What is so-and-so up to these days? When the conversation flags, such basic questions as "How are you getting on?" are used to get it started again. It would be a mistake to lose patience with these conventions, which simply exist to fill gaps in the conversation and to create a companionable atmosphere.

When your thirst has been quenched you will be brought dishes of dried fruit, cakes, fresh fruit.... It has been decided that you will stay and any pretext will be used to keep you. You can't leave without tasting our fruit! How can you refuse, faced with such a tempting array of grapes, figs, peaches and cucumbers?

Pause between mouthfuls and you will notice that the room where you are being entertained does not seem to be in regular use. It is certainly not the place where the family watches television or reads the papers. Even poor families have a place where guests can be entertained, although in modern apartments space is limited. Wealthier families used to Western-style comfort keep a guest-room furnished with armchairs and a sofa, while in more modest rural homes cushions are arranged around the central carpet. Guests who have travelled far sleep in the same room, for which carefully folded sheets, blankets and a mattress are always at hand and will be laid on the carpet for the night.

The urbanization of the last thirty years, the wear and tear of city life, cramped apartments... all these factors make it increasingly difficult to offer hospitality. Moreover, travelling has become commonplace and the arrival of a relative from the airport after a flight lasting an hour or two bears little resemblance to that of the exhausted dust-caked traveller of not so very long ago, who had suffered extremes of heat and cold and had not slept for several nights. Such hardships are only a memory today, when proliferating hotels and restaurants cater for the growing number of people who wish to travel anonymously, without imposing on the hospitality of a relative or friend and incidentally sparing themselves the duty to reciprocate.

YANN RICHARD, of France, is a researcher at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS). He lived for several years in Iran, where he worked with the French Institute of Iranology, Tehran. He has published several studies on Iranian culture, and is co-author (with B. Hourcade) of *Téhéran au-dessous du volcan* ("Tehran under the Volcano", Autrement publishers, Paris, 1987) and editor of a collection of articles on Iran and the West published by the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Paris, in 1989.



Detail of a 14th-century Persian miniature

Most large family get-togethers, which are less common today than they used to be, tend to take place during the major festivals of the religious or civic calendar. On these occasions succulent dishes are laid out on cloths spread over the carpet, and twenty or thirty people gather to eat. But in contrast to the welcome ceremonies described above, people talk as little as possible during these meals, and eat hurriedly, which is a pity since people would often be happy to take a second helping and savour the meal at their leisure.

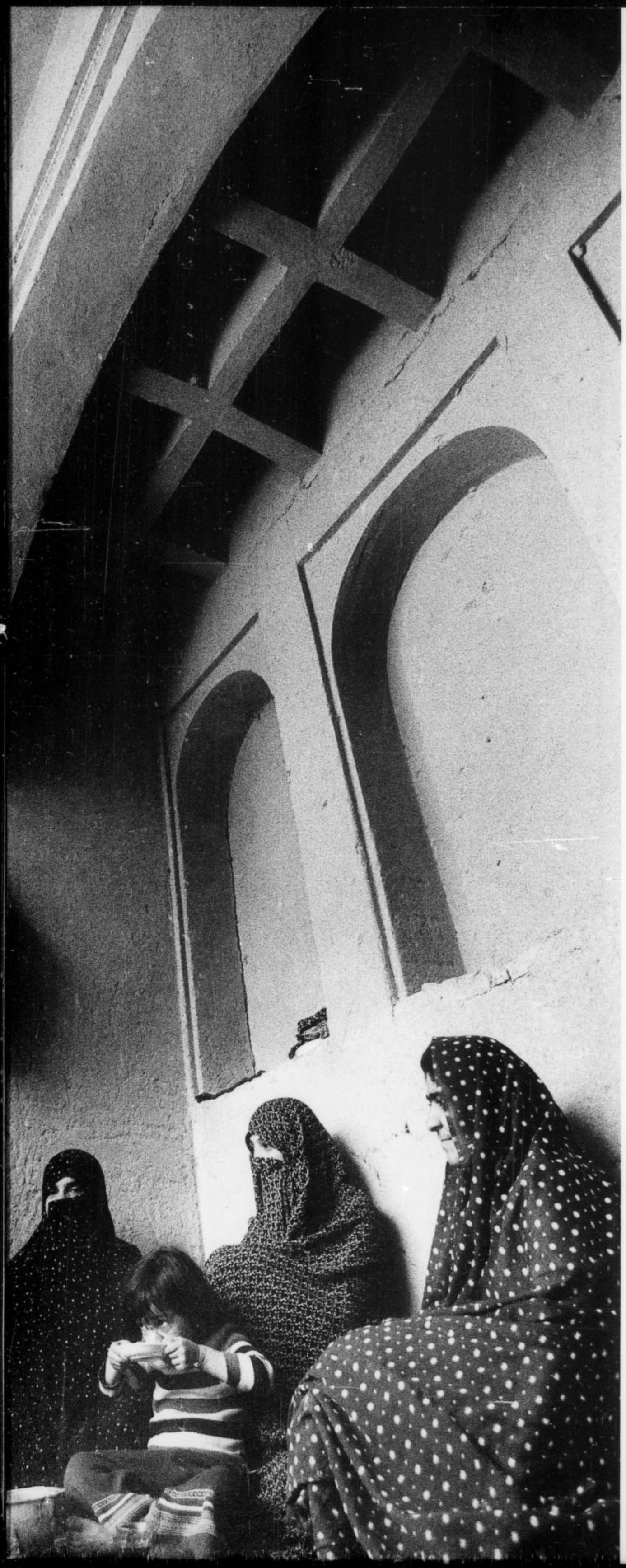
The guest-room in a house at Shiraz (Iran)

Enormous quantities of food are prepared for these family reunions, and if supplies were to run out, the master of the house would give the shameful impression that he is ungenerous. When you have finished, don't forget to say that you are full. Extra guests commonly turn up at the last minute, when someone brings along an unexpected visitor, a relative or a friend. There are never any seating problems as everyone squeezes up around the cloth, and if the meal is served on a table it is often in the form of a buffet since there are rarely enough chairs to go round.

Once the meal is over, more tea is served and the ceremony quickly comes to an end. The master of the house will beg you to excuse the frugality of his hospitality and the poor quality of his food, but of course you will protest by insisting that your hosts have done everything they could, that is to say a great deal, and that you are very grateful to them.

Although the master and mistress of the house always stay in the background, try to satisfy your every need and give you the place of honour, do not think that a guest's role is simply to relax. First of all you must humbly

Preparing tea at Yazd (Iran)



accept the honours bestowed on you, respond to the polite remarks addressed to you, and help yourself to the dishes offered to you even if you don't want them. All these signs of good manners will show the host that his attempts at hospitality have not been in vain. The guest loses his independence and becomes, as a Persian saying ironically puts it, "the master's donkey"!

The guest's paramount duty, however, is to return the courtesy. At New Year *(Now Rouz)* a return visit is practically taken for granted, as anyone who has received guests has been placed under an obligation to them. It may seem surprising that people you have just entertained in your home insist on receiving you the following day, but to refuse would be embarrassing as it would put them at a disadvantage and leave them in your debt. The uninitiated who accept the lavish hospitality of Iranians often forget this duty to reciprocate and earn themselves a black mark socially. One way to make up for not being able to return the invitation is to bring a present.

But compensation for generosity may come much later. Someone from the provinces living in Tehran or another big city will feel particularly honoured to receive people from his village, even if they stay for several days. Such a visit is a tribute to his social success and raises his standing in the neighbourhood. Guests of this kind are therefore a blessing, because although they may cost their host something in food and effort, their visit enhances his prestige.

One benefit of hospitality, and not the least, is that it puts paid to disagreement and conflict. While "bread and salt" are being shared there is no question of perpetuating grievances or of picking quarrels. A tacit truce by both parties, host and guest, creates a feeling of solidarity that nothing can destroy. The same principle, when institutionalized, guarantees the traditional right of asylum in places held to be sacred: mosques, the homes of great ulemas (religious leaders), the stables or kitchens of the shah or, more recently, embassies and consulates.

When the time has come to take your leave, the host will see you out. This is another way of placing you under an obligation. Among the formalities of leave-taking, you will often hear the same words you heard when you arrived. No irony is intended: this is not a polite way of showing you the door but a way of assuring you in all sincerity that the visit has been beneficial for the household and that you will always be just as welcome in the future. ■

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Pampa-ed guests

BY GREGORIO MANZUR

A region devoted mainly to stock-breeding and farming, the vast Argentine Pampa (a Quechua Indian word meaning "flat surface") is a land of welcome where the practice of hospitality introduced by the Spanish is rooted in Graeco-Roman, Arab and Christian traditions.

There are few towns in this vast 600-square-kilometre plain, which is larger than France and, for the traveller wishing to cross it, roughly equivalent to a journey between Amsterdam and Vienna. It is a land of hamlets and isolated farms, and the hospitality offered there is special, if not unique.

For the gauchos, the cowboys of the Pampa whose nearest neighbours are sometimes several hundred kilometres away, the arrival of a relative, a friend or a stranger used to be regarded as an event. In our time, trains, aircraft and highways have partly put an end to this isolation, but customs have not changed for all that and the people of the Pampa continue to offer a hospitality that has ceased to exist in the towns.

Crossing an ocean of land

The traveller who sets out from Buenos Aires or Montevideo finds himself almost immediately in an ocean of land before an ever-receding horizon. Awed by a feeling of immense space and solitude, he advances along an unending road as straight as an arrow. If he crosses the dry Pampa in the west he will be accompanied only by the "bad lights"—the phosphorescent glow from the skeletons of animals that have succumbed to thirst, hunger or the fury of a puma. In the humid Pampa of the east he will see, on either side of the road, behind barbed wire, hundreds of peacefully grazing animals or huge water tanks beside which horses patiently wait their turn to drink.

The traveller accustomed to short distances is sure to have forgotten something: spare parts for the car, food, a map, matches or a torch. More alarmingly, he may run out of petrol. Vehicles abandoned by the roadside are a common sight. Their owners will have had to walk for hours or perhaps days before reaching an inhabited area. It is in such situations that, weary, thirsty and alone, a traveller really appreciates the generous hospitality of the Pampa.

Seeing him arrive, the gaucho, isolated on his ranch, will raise his arms and greet him with these words: "I hail thee Mary most pure." To these traditional words of welcome the seasoned visitor will reply: "Conceived without sin."

The Argentine Pampa

Inset, left, a group of travellers stop to rest at a ranch near Montevideo. Right, gauchos in Argentina's Corrientes province.

The master of the house, after inviting him in, will then serve him drink and food and start an animated conversation about the weather and the difficulty and fatigue of travelling. The visitor is never asked who he is, where he comes from or what he is looking for in the region. Wherever he is from, near or far, he is the messenger of God. Nothing is too good for him. If the host does not take a liking to the visitor or is not in a cordial mood, he nevertheless does his best to offer what he can. In a rich *estancia* and a poor cottage alike, a visitor will find a room, a bed with clean sheets, a pitcher of water and a bucket or, if there is one, a bath. The peons or the owner's sons will go off to tow his car with a tractor or horses. They will look after the repairs and fill the car with petrol without a thought of payment. A farmer would be extremely offended if he were offered money in exchange for such a service.

Preparing **asado,** *the traditional Argentine speciality of barbecued meat.*

Below, illustration by Eleodoro Ergasto Marenco for an edition of **The Gaucho Martín Fierro,** *the famous epic poem by the Argentine writer José Hernández (1834-1886).*

Asado
gaucho-style

When siesta time is over, at the end of the day, the national dish is prepared. This is known as *asado* and consists of a chunk of meat roasted on a spit or on a grill by an irreplaceable and much-respected figure called the *asador.* Whether he is a labourer or the owner of the farm, only the *asador* is permitted to light the fire and to lay out, turn over and take off the meat, reputed to be the best in the world. In the meantime the woman of the house will attend to the *empanadas* (meat pasties) and the desserts.

The *asado* is more than a traditional form of hospitality; it is a kind of pagan communion. Around the roasting meat friendships are formed as the fruits of the earth, the benefits of work, are shared. If the sky is overcast the meat will be cooked in the kitchen fireplace; if the weather is fine, it will be cooked in the open air. In the presence of women, propriety demands that the food be eaten sitting down. But in a gaucho-style *asado,* the men use the knives they carry on their belts to cut off a piece of meat which they place on a slab of bread and eat standing, sauntering around the grill, avoiding the curls of smoke and from time to time helping themselves from the table laden with salads, wine and pickles.

At the end of the meal, after the dessert, the evening's entertainment can begin. The fireplace

becomes a focus of conviviality. Fresh logs are put on the fire, larger ones now as they have to last, for the festivities may go on into the early hours. And if the fingers of the master of the house or of some peon are not too numb to play the guitar or if luck has it that the local *payador* (strolling singer) is present, then it won't be long before the first sounds of music are heard.

As the evening progresses, *maté,* a brew of leaves from the plant of the same name, prepared by the woman of the house, is passed around among the guests. And as he clears his throat by drinking an excellent *cimarrón* (bitter *maté),* the *payador* will perhaps sing of the gaucho Martín Fierro and his friend Cruz, who fled from the Christian villages seeking refuge among the Puelche Indians in the south of Argentina. In colonial times and during the early period of independence, many "deserters" took refuge among the Indians, who also thought that travellers were to be treated with deference. They believed that an Indian who died fighting alongside such men assumed the form of a thunderbolt or lightning and continued to battle with the usurper in the afterworld. The ties they formed with those who sought sanctuary with them and who shared their fate thus continued to exist even after death.

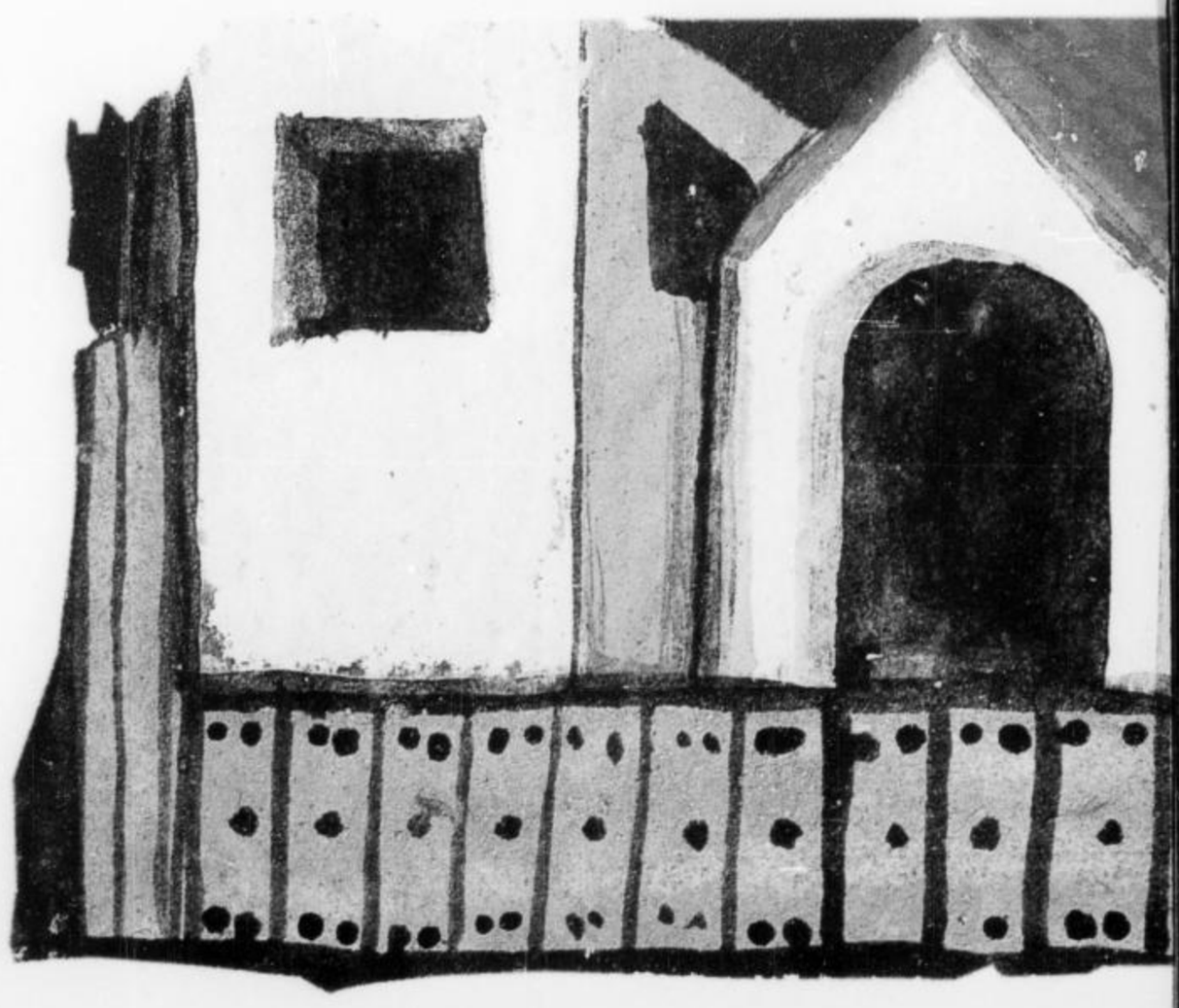
As the music subsides and glasses of juniper wine start being passed around, the host generally offers the visitor a calabash or some other wooden drinking vessel inlaid with silver to be used for *maté,* a powder horn, *bolas* (braided leather straps with stone balls at their ends used for capturing running animals by entangling their legs), or a cross-patterned poncho. If the visitor is on foot, it is not unusual for him to receive a horse and saddle as a gift. "You'll give it back to me some day," the host will say, "next time you're in the area."

When the evening draws to an end it is customary for the guest to stand up and thank his hosts for all the kindness that has been shown to him. Even if his Spanish is not fluent, it will still be enough for him to convey his feelings to these people who are always unstinting in their generosity, even when they have little for themselves.

In the Pampa, visitors have been known to receive hospitality for months and indeed years. Some have taken advantage of this to discover the region, obtain work and found a home after sending for their family from abroad, often from Europe. In this old farm building or that luxurious *estancia* there will be a room reserved for the guest who lived in it for years and promised to return. No one will move into it permanently for at any time the friend of yesteryear may come back. The man of the Pampa is still waiting for him with open arms. ■

GREGORIO MANZUR, Argentine writer and journalist, is a writer and producer with the French radio station France-Culture. His latest work of fiction, *Sangre en el ojo* ("Blood in the Eye", 1989), was awarded a Spanish literary prize.

Os óculos de Álvaro de Campos *(1980, "The spectacles of Álvaro de Campos"), a painting by the Portuguese artist António Costa Pinheiro. Álvaro de Campos is the name of one of several imaginary poets whose lives and works were created by the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935).*



A soldier takes refuge in a monastery. Detail from a 14th-century manuscript preserved in the Marciana library, Venice.

From hospitality to right of asylum

BY JOSÉ AUGUSTO SEABRA

WELCOMING visitors, especially foreigners, has been a sacred duty from the time of Ancient Greece, when visitors were even believed to enjoy the permanent protection of the god Zeus. In the *Iliad,* Homer showed that to harm a visitor was contrary to religion.

The sacred tradition of hospitality has lasted for centuries and is shared by various civilizations. From the Middle Ages on, Christian pilgrims were lodged and fed in churches and monasteries, and the Order of the Knights Templars was specially founded to ensure their protection on their way to Jerusalem during the Crusades. In Islamic countries, pilgrims travelling to Mecca were also treated with consideration. This kindness towards pilgrims can be found in other religions and is a mark of respect and fraternity that transcends frontiers.

With increasing travel, the duty of hospitality, both religious and secular, expanded. The maritime discoveries enabled peoples to get to know each other better and to appreciate traditions of hospitality that were different but often inspired by the same spirit. This is expressed in such works of Portuguese literature as Luís de Camões' *The Lusiads,* that great epic poem about the Portuguese navigators, and *Peregrination* by Fernão Mendes Pinto, an enlightened traveller who ventured into the East where he experienced hospitality that was often more refined than in the West.

In the modern world, one category of foreigners has become particularly important, that of political exiles. While they have always been the subject of humanitarian attention, their status has been more strongly protected since the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. During the French Revolution, in spite of a certain nationalism, foreigners and notably those who had fought for liberty

Sailors' graffiti on a jetty wall at Horta on the island of Faial, Azores, which has been an anchorage since the days of sailing ships.

were welcomed in France as citizens enjoying full rights. This practice has been extended to other countries during the last two centuries.

This obligation, combining tradition and modernity, has strongly influenced the Portuguese way of welcoming foreigners. At different times, under different forms of government, mainly under the liberal government and the republic, foreigners who took refuge in our country because of their convictions and beliefs were welcomed in a spirit of solidarity and congeniality, and this kind of behaviour is typical of the Portuguese attitude to life. The Portuguese always leave their doors wide open to visitors, whether pilgrims, refugees or simply guests. From north to south, from the coast to the interior, everyone is happy to entertain generously and gracefully.

This open-hearted attitude is expressed in the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic of 1976, a product of the democratic regime which followed the Revolution of the Carnations. Article 15 stipulates that foreigners and stateless persons shall enjoy the same rights and accept the same obligations as Portuguese citizens, except for specifically national rights, which may be extended to nationals of Portuguese-speaking countries under reciprocal agreements or international conventions.

Article 33 of the Constitution provides that "the right of asylum be granted to foreigners and stateless persons who are persecuted or gravely threatened with persecution because of their activities in favour of democracy, social or national freedom, peace between peoples, freedom and human rights".

This text incorporates the oldest sources of our civilization as well as the most recent acquisitions of democracy. Tolerance and fraternity are characteristic of the sense of hospitality of Portuguese democrats, who themselves often experienced exile during the period of dictatorship and colonial war, and found refuge in friendly nations. When elected as representatives of the Portuguese people, the former refugees wished to include in the foundation document of their own country the sacred principle of hospitality towards foreigners and stateless persons and especially towards those who are persecuted because of their convictions and beliefs.

"We are strangers wherever we are", wrote Fernando Pessoa, the poet of exile and homecoming. We must know how to welcome each other everywhere in the world. Like religious pilgrims or political exiles of all times, we know that hospitality will be extended to us wherever we go. ■

JOSÉ AUGUSTO SEABRA, Portuguese poet and essayist, is professor of literary theory and of Portuguese literature at the University of Oporto. A former member of parliament and Minister of Education, he is currently serving as his country's Ambassador to Unesco.

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ANCIENT AIR IN ANTARCTIC ICE

To study the Earth's climate as it was more than 100 million years ago, scientists are analysing air bubbles trapped in the Antarctic ice which contains samples of ancient atmospheres. Chemical analysis of such bubbles has produced a 160,000-year record of the concentration of atmospheric carbon dioxide. The data is contributing to knowledge about possible consequences of the greenhouse effect, the global warming caused by the buildup of gases such as carbon dioxide which may lead to major changes in the world's climate.

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LOST CROPS OF THE INCAS

Overlooked for almost 5 centuries, some of the many lush crops cultivated in the Andes by the Incas before the Spanish conquest may have exciting possibilities as an addition to standard urban diets and a source of revenue for Third World countries, according to *The Lost Crops of the Incas*, a recent study by the US National Research Council. The crops, which could possibly be produced not only in the Andes but in mountainous areas of Asia and Africa, include *Arracacha,* roots that taste like a combination of celery, cabbage and roast chestnuts; *nuñas,* beans that pop like popcorn; *quinoa,* grain containing twice the protein of wheat, rice or corn; and fruits such as *chirimoya,* which has a taste reminiscent of papaya, pineapple and banana.

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NEW TECHNIQUE FOR BURN TREATMENT

A promising new technique for treating severely burned patients has been developed by a group of American researchers who are cultivating cells from the healthy parts of patients' skin in layers of cow protein. "The skin is much more similar to human skin than when you use (human) cells alone," says one of the researchers, Dr. John F. Hansbrough, Director of the Burn Center at the University of California's San Diego Medical Center. Grafts produced using the new technique also seem to anchor more rapidly to the body as well as being stronger and more resilient.

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THE LONG AND THE SHORT OF HEART DISEASE

Short men are twice as likely as tall men to suffer a heart attack in middle age, according to an 8-year study of almost 8,000 men funded by the British Heart Foundation. Of the 1,533 men in the sample under 1.67 m (5' 6"), 118 had a heart attack, as against 62 of a similar number over 1.77 m (5' 10"). The researchers said that although shorter men tended to have higher blood pressure and blood cholesterol levels and to smoke more, the decisive factor appeared to be poorer lung function.

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HOME-GROWN PAPER

Scientists believe a new generation of crops can be developed to provide rubber, newsprint, lubricants and other products. The US Association for the Advancement of Industrial Crops reports that a Brazilian chemical company is introducing *guar,* a plant which yields a gum with a wide range of uses including thickening ketchup, and *vernonia,* oil from which could be used as a paint thinner. One pilot plant is to be built in Arizona to extract rubber from the desert shrub *guayule,* and another facility is expected to open in 1991 in Texas to process *kenaf,* a tall fibrous annual plant, into newsprint.

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FAIR PLAY AWARDS

A Soviet-Canadian trans-Arctic skiing expedition and an Olympic boxing champion from Cuba have won the International Pierre de Coubertin Fair Play Trophies awarded annually by the International Committee for Fair Play under the auspices of Unesco. In a 91-day journey, the 13-man ski team crossed the Arctic Ocean via the North Pole from the Severnaya Zemlya Archipelago in the USSR to World Hunt Island in Canada. Cuban boxer Teofilo Stevenson won the Trophy for his record of fair play throughout his career.

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REDISCOVERED MANUSCRIPT BY RLS

A long-forgotten story by Robert Louis Stevenson, the author of Treasure Island, has been rediscovered and published for the first time. The story, "The Enchantress", was probably written in 1889 when Stevenson was en route from Hawaii to Samoa, where he spent the last 5 years of his life. The 27-page ms. was recently acquired by Yale University and discovered by Prof. David Mann. The story appeared in the autumn 1989 edition of the *Georgia Review,* the University of Georgia's literary magazine.

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YOUNG SCIENTISTS SHARE EC RESEARCH PRIZE

Nine budding scientists from 6 European countries won first prize in a 1989 European Community contest to encourage scientific research among young people. The winning entries included two devices to help the disabled—a typewriter with an eye-operated control unit, and a walking aid whereby people can support themselves by pushing a hand bar along tracks set into the walls. The scientists, whose ages ranged from 16 to 21, have each been awarded a scholarship worth 5,000 European Currency Units ($5,550).

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DICTIONARY OF SUPERSTITIONS PUBLISHED

A 1,500-entry dictionary of superstitions, including black cats, stepping on cracks and knocking on wood, has been published by the Oxford University Press. Authors Moira Tatum and Iona Opie believe that many superstitions of today are not only universal but can be traced back thousands of years beyond written history. "Although we know it goes back 4,000 years to nature worship, the earliest written reference to knocking on wood is a 19th-century children's game," Ms. Tatum said.

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RISING CASPIAN FLOODS COASTAL TOWNS

The Caspian Sea, which borders on the Soviet Union and Iran, has risen 1.5 m in the last 10 years, flooding many coastal towns and baffling scientists, reports the Soviet news agency Tass. The Aral Sea, on the other hand, some 480 km to the east, is drying up because so much of its water is being used for irrigation.

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HIGH-PERFORMANCE PLASTICS USED IN EXPERIMENTAL HOUSE

A gracious colonial-style house has been built in Pittsfield, Massachusetts (USA), as a laboratory to explore the use of plastics in housing construction. About one-third of the house, whose total cost has been estimated at $10 million, is made of high-performance engineering plastics which have high melting points, create little smoke when they burn and have good sound-proofing properties.

THE RETURN OF THE INCA

BY PERLA PETRICH

DEEPLY rooted in the experiences of the peoples of the continent, the vivid, dynamic epics of Latin America predate the Spanish conquest by centuries.

The ancient inhabitants of Mexico, for whom the epic was of fundamental importance, recorded countless tales, legends and myths in Codices, locally produced books consisting of pictographs combined with ideograms and phonetic hieroglyphs. They had centres at which young people were taught the contents of these books and the precise wording in which they should be expressed. The objective of the teachers at these centres was to get their pupils to learn by heart the epic poems, sayings and myths that went with the illustrations in the Codices.

Most of these Codices, which the missionaries described as "pagan" and "works of the devil", were destroyed during the Spanish conquest. Nevertheless, the evangelizers could not eradicate the memory nor prevent the oral transmission of the great themes of these epics which have persisted in many cultures. Furthermore, some of the descendants of the ancient nobility (such as Chimalpain and Ixtlilxóchitl) were quick to adopt the Latin alphabet for making transcriptions of tales in their own language. This was how the *Anales de Tlatelolco* ("Annals of Tlatelolco") originated among the Nahua. This manuscript, now preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, contains the genealogies of the ancient rulers and an account of the Spanish conquest.

Hundreds of poems have survived in the same way, such as those contained in *La colección de cantares mexicanos* ("The Anthology of Mexican Epic Poems"), now in the National Library of Mexico, and in the so-called *Manuscrito de los romances de los señores de la Nueva España* ("Manuscript of the Romances of the Gentlemen of New Spain"), now in the University of Texas library.

The decapitation of the Inca.
Illustration from a 16th-century Peruvian codex.

The most important Maya manuscripts are by anonymous authors—the *Libros del Chilam Balam* ("Books of Chilam Balam"), written in Yucatecan Maya, and the *Popol Vuh,* written in Quiché Maya. Both manuscripts contain historical and prophetic narratives.

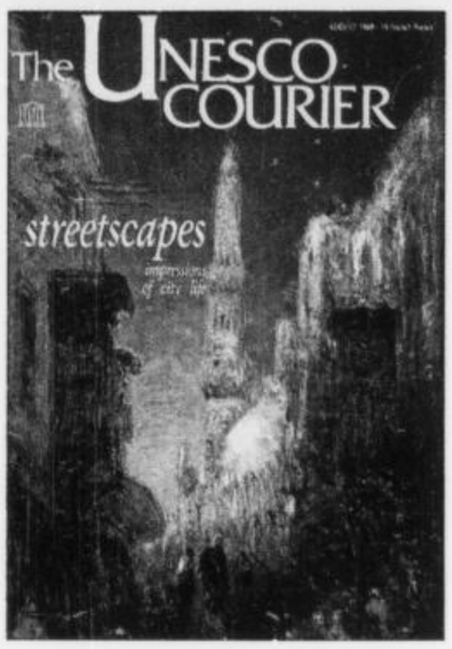
A number of mestizo writers such as Fernando Alvarado Tezozómoc, and several Spanish missionaries, also collated the traditions of these peoples and recorded them in written form. Among the missionaries who undertook this task were the monks Andrés de Olmos, Benavente Motolinía and, most important of all, Bernardino de Sahagún who, between 1565 and 1569, wrote, in Spanish, the famous *Historia general de las cosas de la Nueva España* ("General History of the Things of New Spain"). In this way many of these epics have come down to us in the form of written documents.

Both the Nahua and the Maya epics contain heroic tales of the peoples' wanderings in search of a fixed abode, of the founding of cities and of the exploits of the heroes associated with them.

Among the Nahua, for example, the epic of Quetzalcóatl—who was both a divinity and a heroic founding father—is a model of its kind. His story can be pieced together from texts to be found in a variety of documents: *Los anales de Cuauhtitlán* ("The Annals of Cuauhtitlán"), *La historia Tolteca-Chichimeca* ("The History of the Toltecs and the Chichimecs") and *La leyenda de los Soles* ("The Legend of the Suns"), all of which are anthologies of poems and historico-mythical texts recorded by indigenous writers in the middle of the sixteenth century. They relate how, after long and bloody struggles against enemies who sought to introduce the practice of human sacrifice, the priest-king of Tula, the repository of the cultural heritage and guarantor of the purity of the religion, was obliged to give up his functions and disappeared into the sea leaving with his people a promise that some day he would return.

The better known Maya epics are to be found in the *Popol Vuh,* written in the sixteenth century but only discovered at the beginning of the eighteenth century by Father Francisco Ximénez, the parish priest of Chichicastenango, in Guatemala. In addition to cosmogonic myths and legends concerning man's many unsuccessful works, this book relates the wanderings of the first four Quiché chiefs in search of fire and their struggles to consolidate their power and dominion.

The Inca epic relates the wanderings of the four tribes which founded



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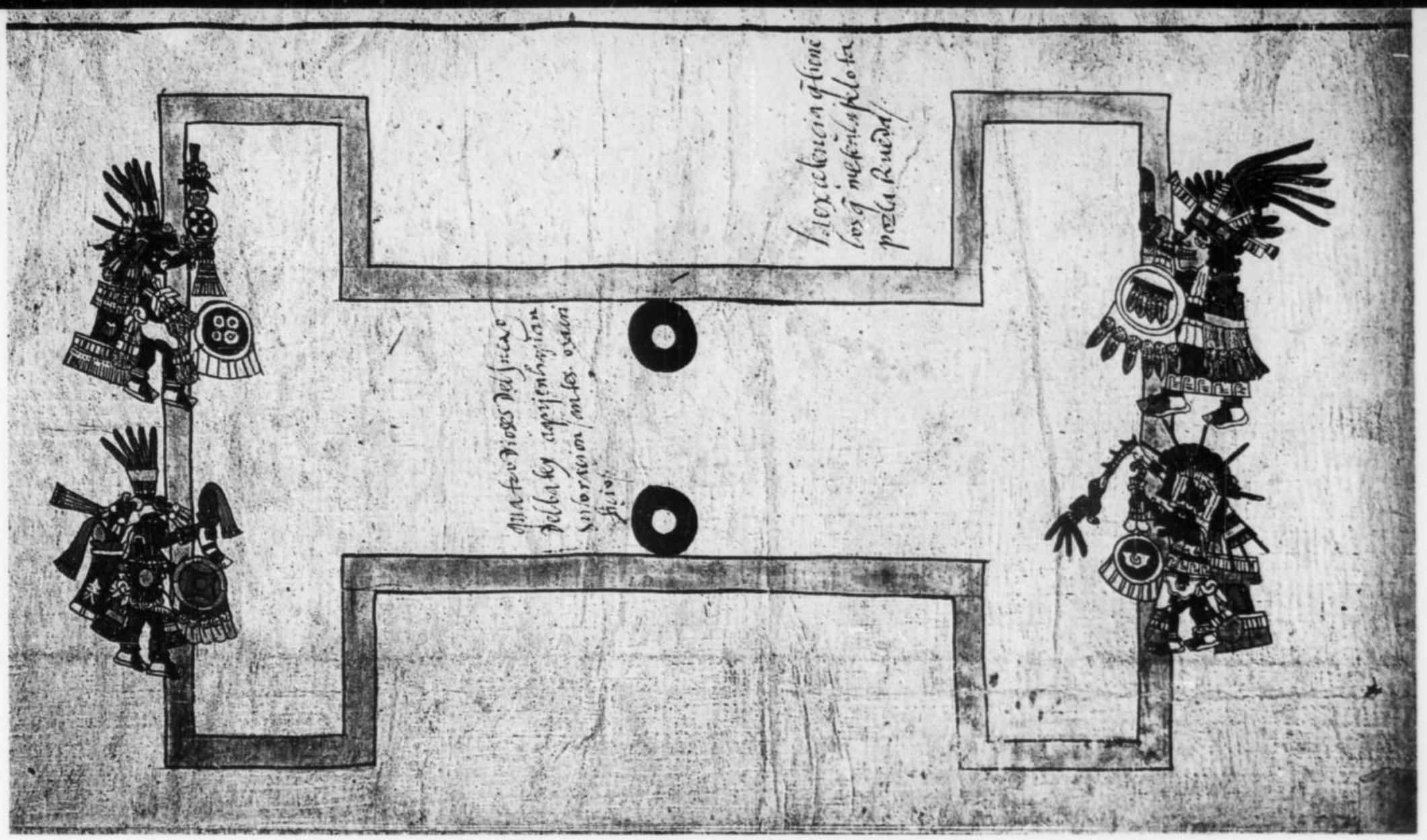


Quetzalcóatl and 3 other Aztec divinities are shown competing in a ritual game of pelota in this illustration from the *Codex Borbonicus* (1325-1521).

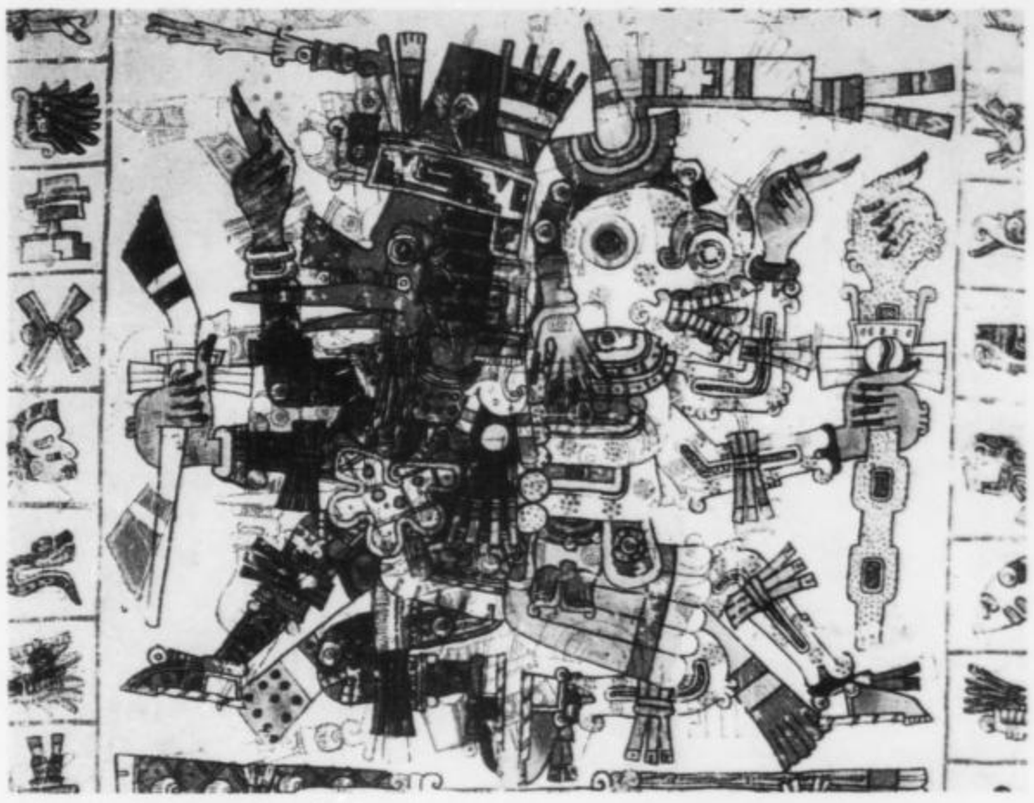
Cuzco. According to the versions collated by the Peruvian ethnologist J. Ossio, four brothers set out from four caves accompanied by their wives. Only one couple, Ayar Manco and Mama Ocllo, reached the valley of the Cuzco river. There, on the spot where Ayar Manco buried his golden staff deep in the earth, the imperial capital was built.

Son of the Sun

The Inca epic also provides a typical example of the vitality and persistence of mythical narratives among the indigenous communities of Latin America. It tells the story of Inkarri, a god said to be the son of the Sun. In many accounts this divinity is portrayed as a victim of the Spanish by whom he was tortured and then beheaded. It is believed, nevertheless, that although separated from the body, the head is still alive and hidden in a secret place (either in Cuzco or in the jungle, according to some of the versions compiled by Ossio). The head is growing a new body and when this body is fully grown the son of the Sun will return as the god who will pronounce the final judgement and the restoration of the empire.

This belief still persists today and each year, in many indigenous communities in Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia, during ceremonies in honour of the local patron saint, representations of the death of the Inca are organized and performed. Like Inkarri, the Inca was worshipped as the son of the Sun, a fact which allows for the identification of the god with the ruler. During these performances, the actors, all of whom are indigenous, dressed in contemporary costumes, act out a series of mythical and historical events which the folk epic juxtaposes within a timeless setting. In this way an amalgam is made of prehispanic beliefs, interpretations of the conquest from the standpoint of the vanquished, and historical happenings from the execution of Atahualpa at Cajamarca in 1533, by order of Pizarro, right up to recent events.

The death of the Inca entailed the defeat of the empire, the end of an epoch and the beginning of Spanish domination. In all these performances Pizarro appears and beheads the Inca. In fact, however, Atahualpa was garrotted (strangled in a sitting position). The fact that in the collective memory strangulation has been replaced by decapitation shows that the people associate the death of the Inca not with that of Atahualpa but with that of Sayri Tupac, who was indeed beheaded and who is considered by them to have been the last of the Inca rulers since he resisted the conquistadors in Vilcabamba until 1572. This also reinforces the identification of the Inca with the god Inkarri, the son of the Sun. This scenario, as it is still performed, conjures up images which signify that at some indeterminate time in the future (when the body of the god/Inca is fully regrown) the ancient civilization will recover all its splendour, will re-establish its own laws and redistribute the land among the descendants of its rightful owners.

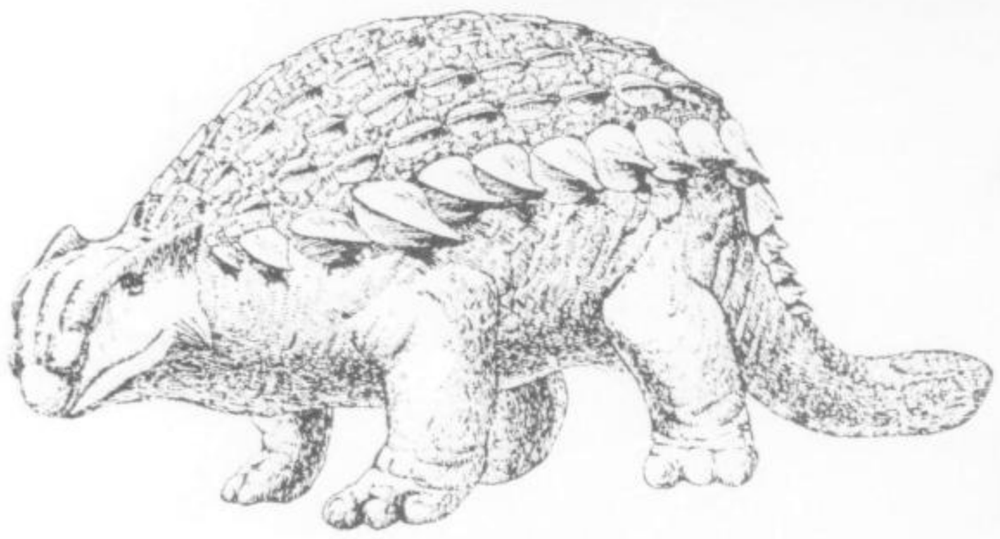


Aztec pictogram showing the eternal cycle of life and death. *Codex Borgianus* (1200-1500).

This epic tale and many others have endured until our day, modified and recreated by the interplay of influences from the indigenous, European and African cultures that have coexisted in Latin America since the end of the fifteenth century. One consequence of these transformations has been a greater similarity between themes from the different cultural regions. However, another possible explanation of this increasing similarity is that the history of the people of Latin America since the arrival of the Europeans has developed within a single context—colonial domination and underdevelopment. Perhaps the similarity of social and political conditions is tending to unify the collective imagination. ■

PERLA PETRICH,
of Argentina, is professor of Latin American literature at the University of Paris VIII and a member of the French National Centre for Scientific Research's Laboratory of Languages and Civilizations with an Oral Tradition (LACITO).

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE DINOSAURS, A SCIENTIFIC ENIGMA



Ankylosaurus,
an armoured dinosaur over 4 metres long.

BY LÉONARD GINSBURG

DINOSAURS lived on Earth for 150 million years, from the Triassic to the Cretaceous Periods, and then became extinct. Reptiles with elongated legs, they are a source of interest and astonishment because of the gigantic size of some of them, because of their strange shape and their longevity, and because they disappeared simultaneously from the face of the Earth 65 million years ago.

Study of their skeletons has made it possible to reconstitute the physical appearance of dinosaurs, but the reason for their disappearance has proved more difficult to establish. Specialists in several scientific disciplines including biology, physiology, palaeoclimatology, palaeography and astronomy have tried to solve the mystery. Many hypotheses have been proposed, most of them short-lived. At present there are two conflicting theories based on diametrically opposed premises and modes of reasoning. According to the first or "catastrophist" thesis, dinosaurs were exterminated by extra-terrestrial objects. The second, or "gradualist" thesis is centred on the evolution of geological phenomena.

The killer comet theory

Large amounts of iridium, palladium and platinum have been found near Gubbio in central Italy in sediments deposited during the transition between the Cretaceous and the Tertiary Periods—what is known as the K/T boundary. Layers rich in iridium from the same geological period have also been found in Denmark, Spain, France and New Zealand. The American geologist Walter Alvarez believes that the fact that the sedimentary deposits date from the same period as the extinction of the dinosaurs cannot be a mere matter of chance, and that there is a cause-and-effect relationship between the two phenomena.

The scenario proposed by Alvarez in 1980 is as follows: iridium is a very rare element and its concentration in a sedimentary deposit must result, not from the erosion of ancient rocks nor from biochemical phenomena, but from the impact made by an extraterrestrial object that collided with the Earth. Meteorites are rich in iridium and Alvarez suggested that a meteorite with a diameter of between 6 and 10 kilometres crashed into the Earth and raised an immense cloud of terrestrial dust which mingled with the dust released by the break-up of the meteorite itself, blotting out the sunlight and preventing photosynthesis from taking place. This night may have lasted between six and ten years, during which the dinosaurs died of hunger. The much smaller mammals may have survived by eating seeds and undecomposed plant residues.

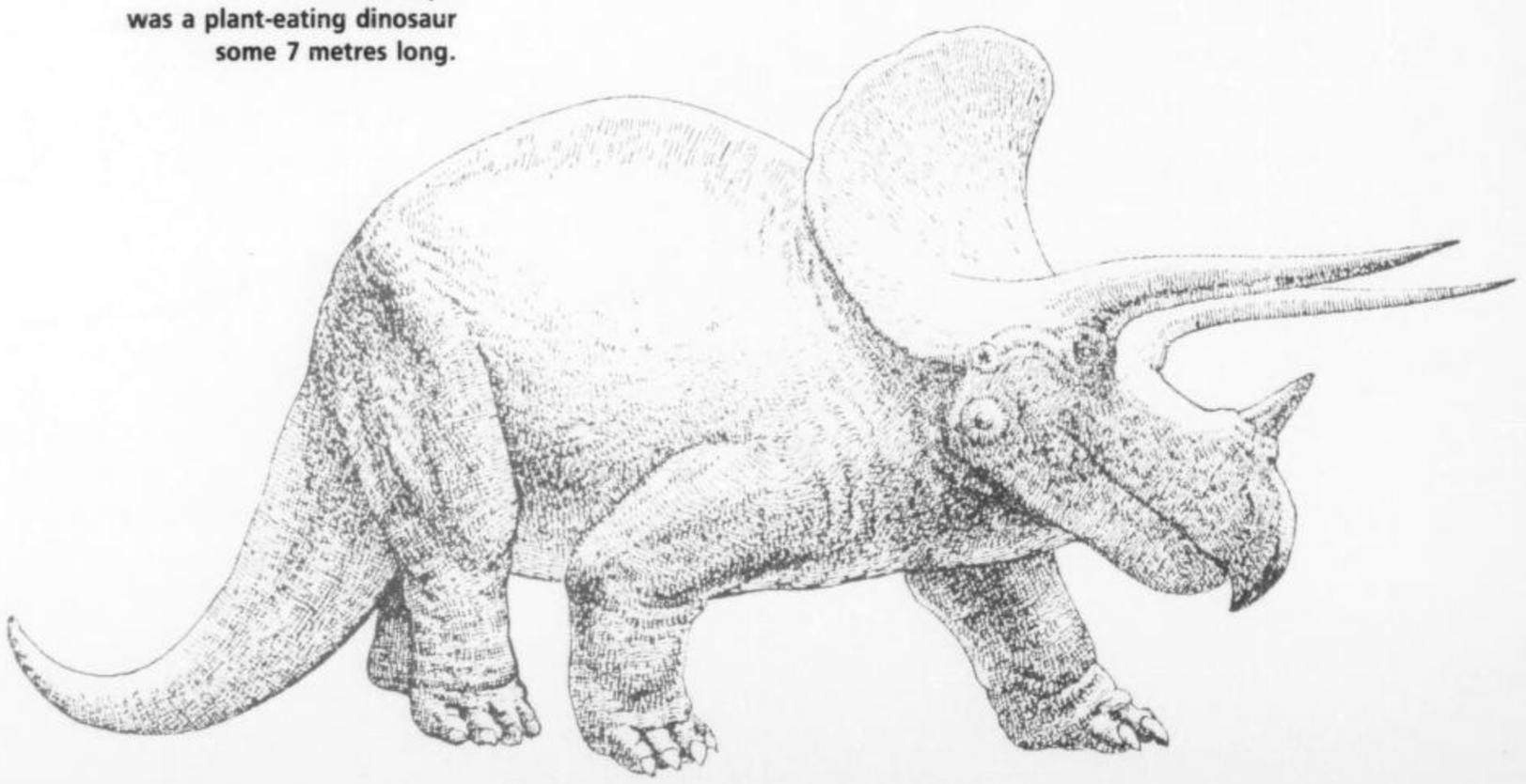
Since it was first put forward, this theory has undergone several modifications. In the iridium-rich layers it has been observed that the mass of matter of terrestrial origin is much less than that which the impact of a meteorite could have produced. Thus the meteorite was replaced by comets which would have disintegrated as they approached the Earth and unleashed a hail of debris. After that point the scenario is unchanged.

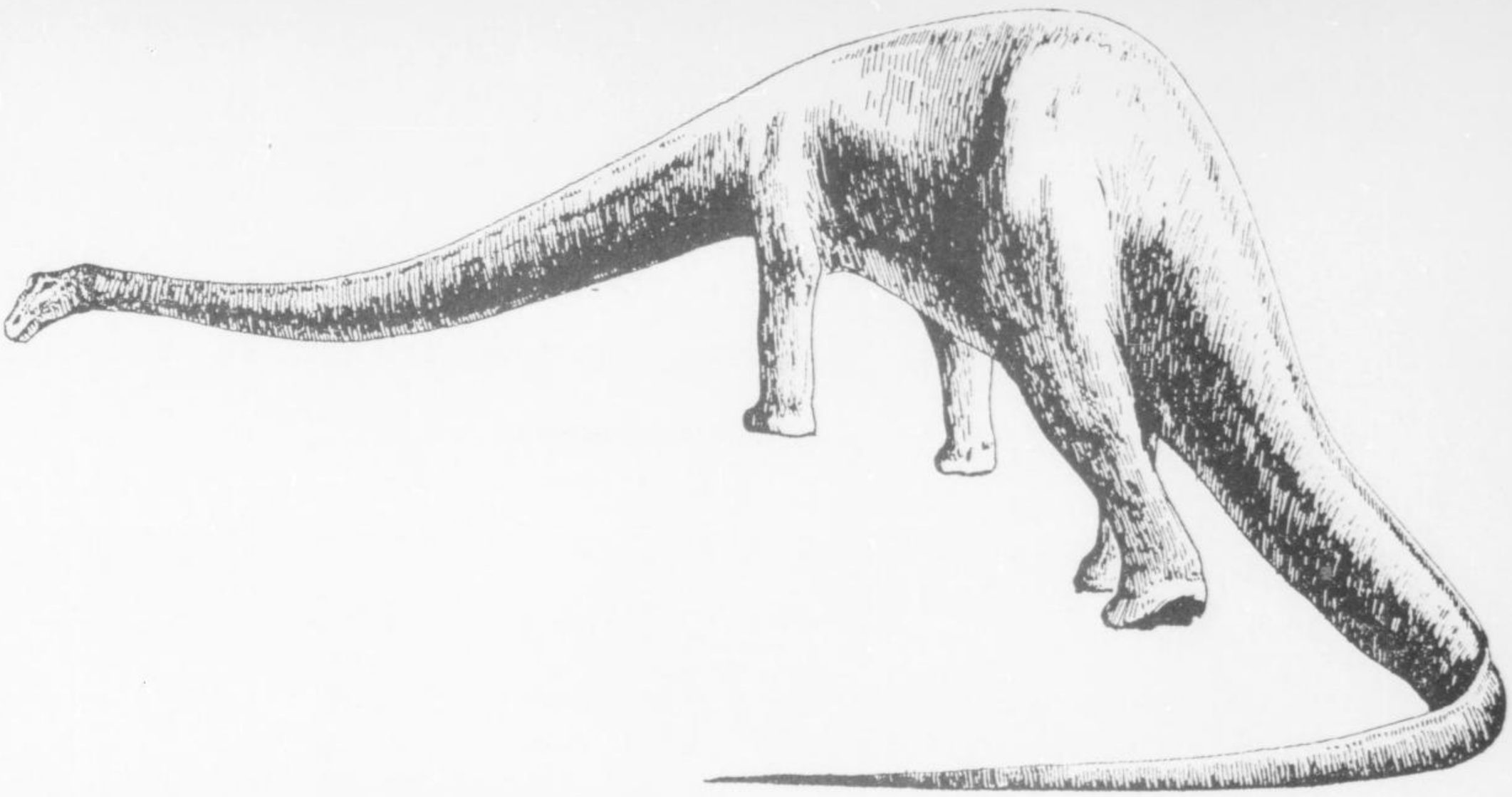
Falling sea levels and glaciation

Another theory, which I first put forward in 1964, is based on the fact that what are now known as the mass extinctions coincided with regressions of the sea. Each major division in the geological time-scale begins with a marine transgression (the spread of the sea over land areas) accompanied by the appearance of a new fauna, and ends with a marine regression (the retreat of the sea) which is contemporary with a mass extinction. It is hard to believe that the simultaneous occurrence of marine regressions and mass extinctions over a period of 600 million years could have been fortuitous. There must have been a direct cause-and-effect relationship between the fluctuations of sea level and the renewal of animal life in the course of geological time.

The neritic regions, which consist of the belt of shallow water adjoining the seacoast up to a depth of some 120 metres, are those in which sunlight penetrates most. They are

Triceratops
was a plant-eating dinosaur some 7 metres long.





Diplodocus,
a giant dinosaur which probably fed on soft vegetation.
The biggest known example was 27 metres long.

consequently the parts of the ocean which are richest in microflora and hence, because of the food chain, in fauna. The great invasions of the sea were a time of expansion for the neritic regions. In the Middle Cretaceous, for example, they covered most of Europe from Brittany to the Urals. The retreat of the sea during the Late Cretaceous reduced the area of this submarine continental plateau by between 200 and 300 times. Lack of space led to competition between the marine animals which lived there. The fauna were thus reduced naturally as the space available to them diminished.

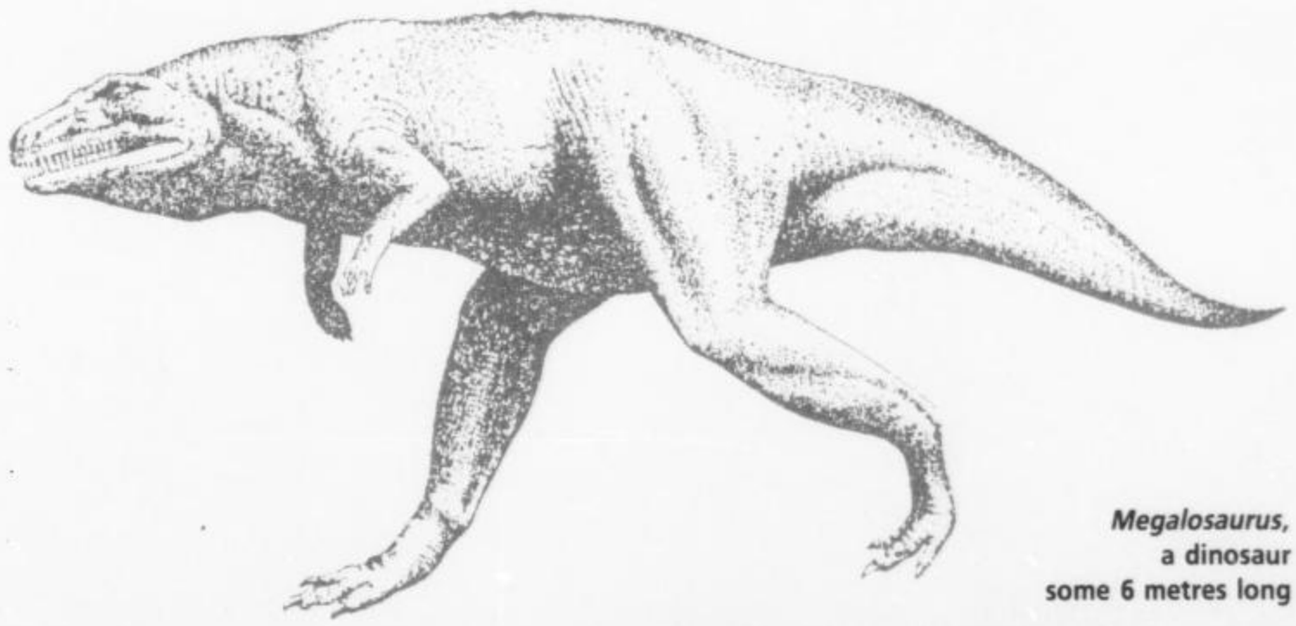
Almost all groups of animals were affected. Some, such as the ammonites, the belemnites and the marine reptiles which fed on them, disappeared totally. Others, such as the brachiopods and to a much smaller extent the echinoderms, did not totally disappear but were strongly affected. Furthermore, the sea retreated slowly, over a period of 15 million years. The extinction of ammonites and other zoological groups thus took place gradually, as did that of the dinosaurs.

The extension of the land surface must have provoked a continentalization of the climate, bringing wider differences in temperature between winter and summer. There was also a general fall in mean annual temperature.

The dinosaurs, large animals of variable temperature, were directly affected by climatic cooling. Their internal temperature, like that of all reptiles, followed the fluctuations of the surrounding temperature and when the latter dropped to the limit of the internal temperature necessary for biological activity, they perished. Small reptiles were more resistant since they could hibernate or go to ground, as species do in temperate regions today. Since their temperature is constant, mammals and birds are less dependent on external climatic conditions than reptiles and were thus able to survive the transition between the Cretaceous and the Tertiary Periods.

These two theories have their supporters and their detractors. The theory of the killer comet, based as it is on extraterrestrial phenomena, has exercised a strong fascination on the public and received wide media coverage. It has topical overtones in an age of space exploration and fear of thermonuclear destruction. If it were proved to be correct, it might also provide an acceptable approximation of the effects of a major nuclear catastrophe on the biosphere.

More biological in nature and more global in its scope, the falling sea level theory explains a greater number of obscure phenomena, and provides a link between a range of geological events. Consequently, it is more widely accepted by geologists and palaeontologists. However, it is complex, technical and unspectacular. In a century of speed, record-breaking and concern for short-term profit, a theory based on the effects of a phenomenon which took place over 15 million years may have less immediate appeal than its rival. ■



Megalosaurus,
a dinosaur
some 6 metres long

LÉONARD GINSBURG
is a French specialist in anatomy and vertebrate palaeontology whose main areas of research are reptiles and mammals. He has directed excavations in many countries and has published over 200 scientific papers.

THE GREAT WALL OF MEDIEVAL PARIS

BY ARTHUR GILLETTE

You can buy no postcards of it. There are no organized tours to visit it. Guidebooks are far from loquacious about it. And no signposts will lead you along its path. Yet there it is, numerous vestiges of it at any rate, many in plain sight of the tens of thousands of Parisians who pass by some part of it each day without knowing what they are seeing—perhaps without even really seeing it.

What is it? Quite simply the formidable wall built around Paris from 1190 on the orders of Philip Augustus, one of the great Capetian kings of medieval France (reigned 1179-1223). The rampart's 800th anniversary this year is perhaps a chance to pierce its undeserved anonymity.

The wall was intended to defend what had recently become the French capital against the Anglo-Norman armies entrenched a few kilometres down the Seine, when Philip left for the Third Crusade to the Holy Land with Richard the Lionheart in 1191. That Richard was king of England only goes to show that alliances were no simpler then than now.

Today the remains of Philip's wall enclose an oval space of some 253 hectares which at the time of its construction was occupied by around 100,000 people, indeterminate amounts of livestock and countryside expansive enough to be commemorated in still-surviving place-names.

There is some disagreement among archaeologists as to certain of the rampart's measurements, but depending on the differing strategic needs of various parts of the perimeter it appears that it was 6 to 9 metres high and 2.6 to 2.8 metres thick at its base, tapering at the top, along which ran a walkway for lookouts and archers. Along the right (north) bank of the Seine the rampart

was built largely at local merchants' expense to protect the commerce that was beginning to thrive in the relatively peaceful conditions afforded by the Capetian central government.

No such source of funds was to be found on the left bank. Although there were wealthy monasteries and other religious establishments, they had their own fortifications. The south side of the city was shared by farmers and the usually penniless students of what became known as the Latin Quarter because of the common language of its plurinational population. So the king paid for the wall on the south bank. This was probably not a gesture of selfless generosity, but rather seems to have been a calculated political and psychological tactic in his struggle against the still-powerful and still-numerous feudal lords, over whom he exercised only indirect control to which they submitted grudgingly at best.

In addition to fortified gates at the entry and exit points of the main east-west and north-south thoroughfares, the wall was punctuated by a semicircular tower some 6 metres in diameter every 60 metres or so. Why this distance? Probably so that bowmen on adjacent towers could control the span of wall separating them, as it has been shown that the maximum effective range of a crossbow is about 30 metres.

Unlike fortifications built on Philip's orders at other cities, the Paris wall had no moat. A moat was eventually built, a century and a half later, when during the Hundred Years' War between England and France Charles V refurbished the capital's defences in a project that also included the construction of the Bastille.

Another reason for the construction of the wall may have been the king's passion for enhancing the infrastructure of French society at a time when it was emerging from the more anarchic earlier medieval period. During Philip's reign and largely at his initiative, a flurry of urban construction was carried out that was truly worthy of a rising national capital.

For the first time since the Roman occupation of Gaul, the main streets of Paris were paved. The Hôtel Dieu hospital, which still operates near its original location, was built. So was a central enclosed market, with doors that could be locked at night, which partly replaced the peripatetic fairs then common and put business on a daily rather than a seasonal basis. Known as Les Halles, this market was not moved from its original site to the city outskirts until the 1970s. Work on Notre Dame cathedral, begun under Philip's father Louis VII, proceeded apace, and the fortress on whose site the Louvre now stands was built.

Philip's lifelong ambition seems to have been to forge a powerful central monarchy that directly controlled an ever-expanding territory. If not yet a nation, France was already beginning to assume the substance and trappings of a state.

The Church was a potential ally against Philip's enemies, but he had alienated Rome (for example he had had his second marriage annulled to free him for a third) to such an extent that he and France were excommunicated for a while. This was a very grave measure, in his subjects' eyes at least. There remained as a possible counterweight to feudal power the small but steadily growing urban populations and in particular their merchant élites.

Philip was not unfailingly solicitous to the nascent bourgeoisie, yet he often treated it as an ally. On departing for the Crusades, for example, he broke with tradition and entrusted the keys of the royal treasury to seven townspeople. He also granted charters to guilds of butchers and drapers and favoured the ascendancy of the watermen's guild. The watermen were of vital importance to ensure Parisian control over transport of goods into and out of the city through a network of major rivers—the Marne, Oise and Yonne as well as the Seine. This move was all the more astute as at that time land transport in France was so antiquated that it still depended in some places on the remains of the roads abandoned by the Romans.

The wall thus may be interpreted as a political and psychological as well as a military statement, saying in effect that "feudalism stops here, and here begins a qualitatively new kind of life--urban life". The city had begun to offer refuge, anonymity, alternatives and at least a degree of freedom unknown in the lords' domains—a runaway serf who managed to enter the city and stay there uncaught for a specified period (such as a year and a day) became a free man.

A glance at a map of Paris will show how the French capital has grown in concentric ovals out from its twelfth-century perimeter wall, the 6 to 9 metres of stone which proclaimed "the city begins here". ■

Above and opposite page: vestiges of the rampart which King Philip Augustus began to build around Paris in 1190. Photo at far left shows a narrow building put up in place of a torn-down section of the wall.

ARTHUR GILLETTE
is the editor of Unesco's international quarterly *Museum* and the author of many articles on cultural themes.

ARCHAEOLOGISTS OF THE YEAR 2000

BY FRÉDÉRIC BERTHAULT

IN the Landes *département* of south-western France, a group of school-children visit a rock shelter used by hunter-gatherers of the Old Stone Age. The shelter is located on a cone-shaped mass of debris overlooking a river at a ford. From this vantage point early man kept watch as the animals crossed at different seasons. The skeleton of a dismembered reindeer unearthed on the site is a tangible piece of evidence which can help the children to imagine how the hunter-gatherers lived in those remote times.

In the neighbouring *département* of Lot-et-Garonne, the children visit Stone Age rock shelters located at the riverside, suggesting that fishing was practised there. Nearby megaliths and objects preserved in local museums help teachers explain how man the predator became a stock-raiser, then abandoned a nomadic life and turned to agriculture, how his growing mastery of fire enabled him to improve the quality of the earthenware he made and to develop metalwork techniques, first with bronze and then iron.

By on-the-spot study of these and other sites the children can form a picture of the changing human impact on the landscape, as well as changes in activities and habitat which took place down the ages in response to different needs.

The children are taking part in special "heritage classes",. which were launched as an experiment in 1982 in the Aquitaine region to which the Landes and Lot-et-Garonne *départements* belong. The purpose of the classes is to introduce young people to the riches of the past and at the same time encourage them to contribute in their own way to the safeguard of the cultural heritage.

As part of the heritage classes, primary school children up to age eleven spend a week with their teachers in places rich in historical monuments and archaeological remains. They usually stay in châteaux, abbeys or other historic buildings, thus learning at first hand about their local heritage, which, hopefully, they will safeguard when they grow up.

After visiting prehistoric sites the children go on a trip to a flint workshop where researchers show them the techniques of our distant ancestors. Then they make stone tools, the efficiency of which they test by using them to scrape skins or wood.

The vestiges of a forum or the ruins of a well-preserved fourth-century villa where the mosaic paving of the baths has survived provide an excellent introduction to the Gallo-Roman period. From there the children move on to another workshop where they make a small mosaic using the methods described by writers of Antiquity.

Twelfth-century abbeys and churches, and strongholds of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries provide material to introduce the children to medieval religious, civil and military architecture, to the ways in which people thought in the Middle Ages, their social and political relationships and their economic problems.

The week ends with an evening get-together at which local musicians play medieval and Renaissance music on old instruments.The music and dancing bring this initiation into the local heritage to a festive conclusion.

At the request of both teachers and pupils, a second, complementary type of heritage class has been created to introduce ten- to fifteen -year-olds to the techniques of archaeology.

It was clearly impossible to allow the children to excavate real archaeological sites which might in any case turn out to yield few finds and would be educationally disappointing. Instead a site has been purpose-built for the budding archaeologists. It consists of a succession of layers or levels, each of which corresponds to a period when the site was occupied. In particular there are a "prehistoric" level and a "historical" level, giving scope for a wide coverage of the science and methods of archaeology.

The reconstitution of the "prehistoric" level was straightforward. Knowledge of vestiges left by European hunter-gatherers and the techniques of making stone tools is today sufficiently advanced to enable archaeologists to recreate with precision the floor of a shelter, a hearth, a rock-cutting area and other remains of a prehistoric camp.

The major difficulty arose with the reconstitution of the "historical" level, surprisingly perhaps since our knowledge of later history is more complete. It would of course have been possible to reconstitute a piece of wall in brick or stone, but the organizers would in this case have had to make reproductions of old earthenware and metal objects, unless material unearthed during excavations was used—and this was out of the question because of the concern to preserve the heritage.

To solve this problem, it was decided to create a "contemporary" level using objects dating from the 1960s picked up on a garbage dump.

Before they start to excavate, the children are told that they are archaeologists in the year 2000 and that surface inspection has yielded evidence that the site on which they are to work had once been occupied. For confirmation they will have to carry out a limited excavation of a 4-metre-square area, using archaeological tools such as trowels, dental instruments and paintbrushes. The levels can easily be identified because they consist of sand stained with different colours. During the excavation, the objects are left in situ.

When each level has been entirely excavated, a drawing is made of its structure and the objects it contains, using decametre sticks, plumb lines and spirit levels, so that the site can be reconstituted to scale the next day in class, when the results are analysed and commented on.

There were grounds for thinking that this "contemporary" level would hold little interest for pupils, but it has turned out to be richer from an educational point of view than any other. The children recognize most of the objects and describe their functions without difficulty. Next they have to find out the uses of different parts of the site, such as a kitchen, part of a bedroom, and a section of street.

The remains of the entrance to a house make it possible to distinguish "inside" from "outside". Traces of garbage outside the house suggest that this was where the dustbin was kept. Bed springs and parts of a television encourage the children to think that here was an area for rest and relaxation, while a water tap and the remains of a washbasin suggest that they might be in a bathroom rather than a living room. Kitchen utensils, gas burners and a refrigerator grid are unequivocal evidence of the functions of the area where they are found. Lastly, information on empty cans or on fragmented objects later glued together indicate their origins and illustrate the notion of exchange between different regions. Some idea of culinary practices can be deduced from the type of utensils and the food products discovered on the site.

The children thus learn from easily recognizable "archaeological" objects how archaeologists excavate and record their findings and how they reason when trying to reconstitute former ways of life.

The excavation then carries on down to the "prehistoric" layer which is pitted with holes for stakes and contains the remains of hearths (charcoal, burned pebbles), pieces of flint, and tools. Building on the experience they have gained from excavating the "contemporary" level, the children's methods have greatly improved. They now confidently use techniques and reasoning which were formerly beyond their grasp. ■

FRÉDÉRIC BERTHAULT, French archaeologist and historian, is in charge of the heritage classes offered by the Aquitaine region of France. He is the author of a number of articles on archaeology which have been published in specialist journals.

Left, young participants in a "heritage class" visit the remains of a medieval stronghold at Hastingues in south-western France.

Letters to the Editor

Appeal to tree-lovers

Arboretums, collections of little-known trees, are of scientific, educational and ornamental interest. Veritable living museums where the diversity of plant species can be preserved, they are of value to professionals such as landscape gardeners and nurserymen and to students, botanists and everyone who cares about trees. In France there are too few arboretums, and many *départements,* such as the Isère, have none at all.

As a tree-lover, I have had the idea of creating an arboretum in the Isère. I am twenty-eight years old and hope to be around long enough to see such a collection grow.

But I need help in finding land and financial backing from people who may know nothing about trees, tend to be interested in short-term gain, and do not readily see the use of what appears to them to be a kind of public forest or garden.

Support from people who understand the value of an arboretum and the wealth of information it can provide could give a kind of "legitimacy" to my project and support to my arguments. I would be very grateful, then, if you would help my cause by publishing this letter.

Pierre Eymery
Chemin du Pré Guillet
38320 Herbeys (France)

Internatia lingvo

I think many people would be glad to have an opportunity to read your magazine in Esperanto. Why not start an Esperanto edition? Excellent translators do exist.

Renée Correy
Besançon (France)

Meso-American mathematics

As a long-standing subscriber I find it very disappointing, to say the least, that your November 1989 issue devoted to mathematics did not mention the Meso-American contribution to maths. Meso-American peoples from the early Olmecs to the Aztecs, not forgetting the Mayas, Zapotecs and Mixtecs, were all capable of determining the movement of the planets, in some cases better than we can today, and of calculating time accurately. Did they not invent a zero symbol in the form of a shell which was just as good as that of the Brahmins? One might think that your "mathematical mystery tour" lost its bearings as soon as it reached the Atlantic.

You will no doubt reply that in such and such an issue, in such and such a year, the subject was covered and that it will be covered again next year. That is beside the point. Such an oversight indicates a flaw in the purpose that should inspire Unesco, and more specifically your magazine—the promotion of cultural exchanges between peoples. We Europeans would never have progressed from the Renaissance to the industrial age without the contribution of Meso-American knowledge of food crops, and our mathematics would not have developed so rapidly if it had been confined to the works of a self-satisfied élite. Some fifty different kinds of fruit and vegetables brought over in the holds of Spanish galleons revolutionized agriculture. This is far from negligible, as when one has enough to eat, one has leisure to cultivate the mind and to attain the poetic heights of mathematics.

Claude Bergerat
Rueil Malmaison (France)

Courier index

I feel that the cumulative index of the *Unesco Courier* covers too long a period—1948-1987, the magazine's first forty years. Having been a subscriber only since 1980, must I wait another forty years for an index of current issues? That would be a pity, as the *Courier* is an excellent working tool for everyone. Why not publish a decennial index?

Daniel Clays
Dunkirk (France)

Such a project is under consideration and a decision will be made shortly.
Editor

Base 60?

In a box on page 16 of your November 1989 issue on mathematics, which was far beyond my range despite the hopes raised by your editorial, the date 1989 is written in Mesopotamian numbers as 33 sixties and 9 ones. I'm surprised that 33 is used in a way that seems to me to be decimal in a number system based on 60. Is this a mistake, or is there some explanation I've missed?

Paul Bresson
Bayeux (France)

Editor's note: James Ritter, who contributed the article on Ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian mathematics to our November issue, replies:

The *signs* used to write each digit (from 1 to 59) are indeed composed of bits representing tens and ones. But the *value* of a digit is given by its position vis-à-vis the other digits and is always a multiple of 1, 60, 60^2, etc.

What about modern maths?

It was a pleasure to read your issue on maths. My only regret is there was not a single article on contemporary mathematics. It's a shame that the story comes to a halt in the middle of the 18th century.

Jacques Ibert
Saint-Maurice (France)

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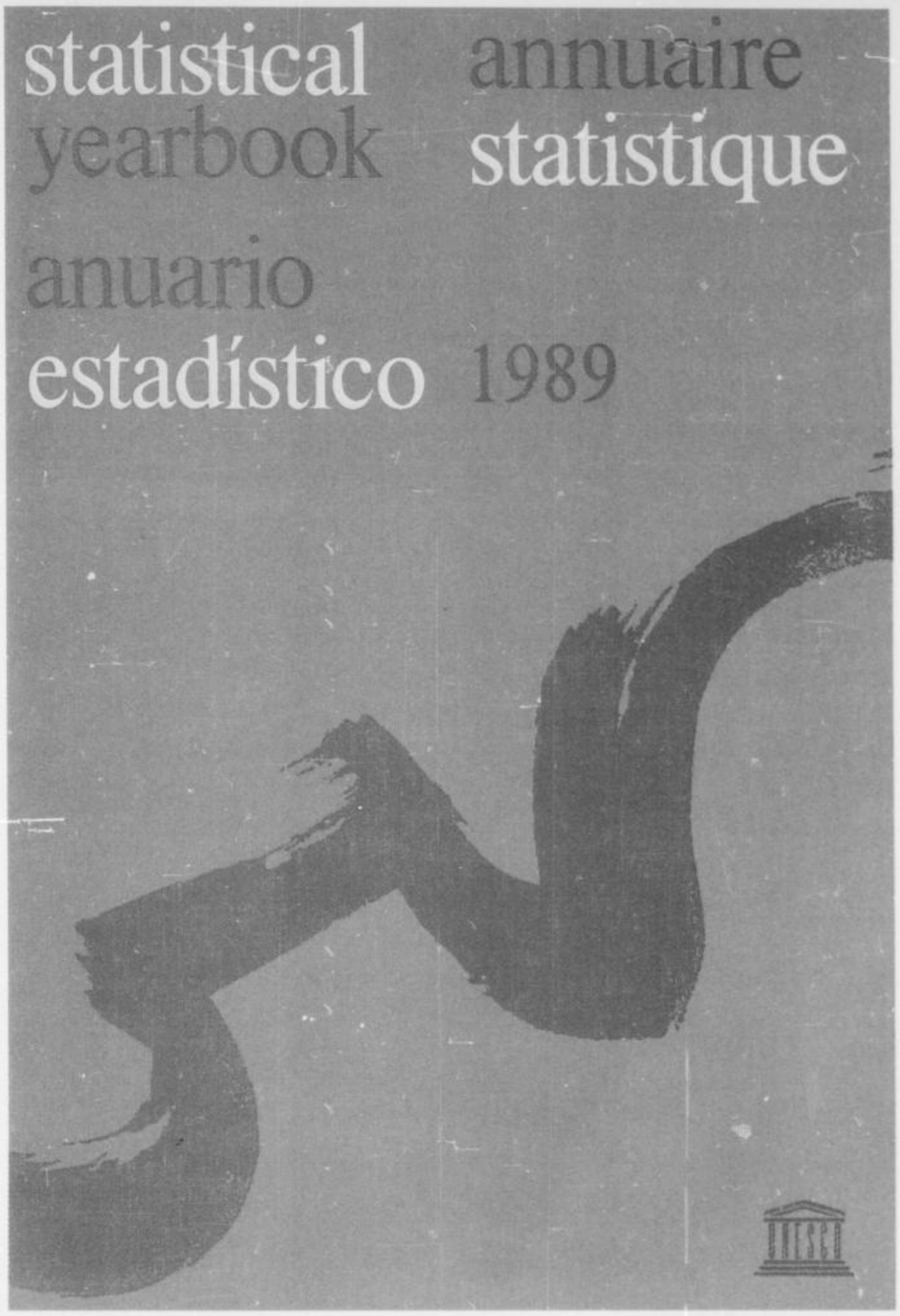

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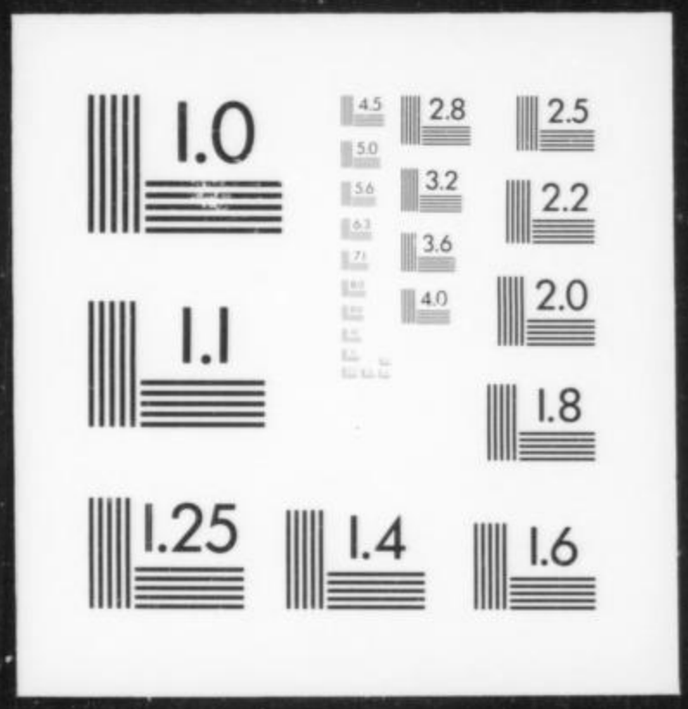
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